



Healthwatch Medway Annual report 2019-20

Guided by you

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About the Healthwatch network

Here to make care better

There are 152 Healthwatch's across England. We work together to make care better.

The network's collaborative effort around the NHS Long Term Plan shows the power of the Healthwatch network in giving people that find it hardest to be heard a chance to speak up. The #WhatWouldYouDo campaign saw national movement, engaging with people all over the country to see how the Long Term Plan should be implemented locally. Thanks to the thousands of views shared with Healthwatch we were also able to highlight the issue of patient transport not being included in the NHS Long Term Plan review – sparking a national review of patient transport from NHS England.

We simply could not do this without the dedicated work and efforts from our staff and volunteers and, of course, we couldn't have done it without you. Whether it's working with your local Healthwatch to raise awareness of local issues, or sharing your views and experiences, I'd like to thank you all. It's important that services continue to listen, so please do keep talking to your local Healthwatch. Let's strive to make the NHS and social care services the best that they can be.



"I've now been Chair of Healthwatch England for over a year and I'm extremely proud to see it go from strength to strength, highlighting the importance of listening to people's views to decision makers at a national and local level."

Welcome to our annual report

I am writing this sitting at home in Medway in the middle of the Covid pandemic!

The world has changed almost overnight as we adjust to working at home, and the importance of our NHS and social care services has come to the forefront like never before.

At Healthwatch we have put the majority of our priorities on hold as we moved swiftly to react and support the public and I want to take the liberty of this introduction to let you know what we have been doing during these unusual times.

Ensuring decision makers hear from real people : we've proactively gathered stories from people all over Medway about how they are coping during Covid. Voluntary organisations have also been telling us how their clients are coping. We share everything we hear every week with Medway Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group as part of their strategic discussions to inform both their emergency and recovering planning.

Supporting NHS volunteers across Medway & Kent : to free up NHS staff, we have been working with Healthwatch Kent to support nearly 3,000 NHS volunteers who aren't able to volunteer due to Covid. We want these volunteers to feel valued and involved so that when the crisis is over, they are able to return to their much missed volunteer roles.

Reaching Hidden Carers during a pandemic : Hundreds of people are looking after someone in Medway right now. Lockdown has meant that it's been harder than ever before. We have been working with Carers FIRST in Medway to reach these people and ensure they know what support is available to them.

Giving Care Homes a voice : at the beginning of lockdown we spoke to a selection of Care Homes, Domiciliary Care services and Personal Assistants, to understand how they have coped and what lessons they have learnt. We've kept in touch and have checked in again to see how they have coped as the pandemic continued. We've given them the opportunity to have a voice and to be heard.

It's been a challenging time, but I am proud about how we have risen to the challenge. Our staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to make a difference and I want to thank them all.

We hope you find this report useful. Do get in touch if you would like to know more about our work.

Maggie Cane
Healthwatch Medway Manager



Our staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to make a difference and I want to thank them all

Our priorities

Last year 203 people cast their vote for what they would like to see us focus on in this financial year 2019 -20 during our roadshow across Medway. Since then we have been focusing on Covid. If life returns to some sort of normal we will revisit the priorities that people voted for which were:



- Care Homes & Domiciliary Care



- Homelessness



- Carers



- Continuing our Covid response

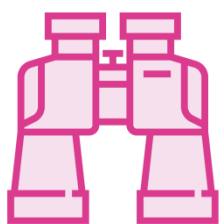


- Community Mental Health



- Access to GPs

“We’ve already made a start on our work around Care Homes in Medway, working with them to understand how they are coping during Covid-19 and what lessons they have learnt.”
Maggie Cane, Healthwatch Medway Manager



Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you.
People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



Our purpose

To find out what matters to you. We then need to make sure decision makers hear your views in the right way at the right time so they can have maximum impact on how services are planned and delivered.



Our approach

People's views come first – especially those who find it hardest to be heard.

We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with other organisations
- Seeking out communities and voices who aren't traditionally heard



Find out more about us and the work we do

Website: www.healthwatchmedway.com

Twitter: @HWMedway

Facebook: @Healthwmedway

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.



Health and care that works for you



9 volunteers

helping to carry out our work

We employed

3.2 staff (full time equivalent)

We received

£121,555 in funding

from Medway Council in 2019-20

Providing support

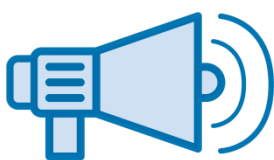


975 people

Have been in touch with us this year to;

- share their health and social care story with us,
- access our information and signposting service,
- or asked us questions about local support

Reaching out



13,396 people engaged with us through our website, through social media, were involved in our projects or came to talk with us at events

Making a difference to care



We published

7 reports

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and from this, we made 29 recommendations for improvement.

How we've made a difference



Speaking up about your experiences of health and social care services is the first step to change.

Take a look at how your views have helped make a difference to young carers in Medway

Helping young carers to get their voice heard

By sharing their stories with us we've been able to ensure decision makers in Medway are now more aware of what it is like to be a young carer.

Reaching young carers is not an easy task as many people do not realise what they are doing makes them a carer. We worked with Carers FIRST and together we listened to a brilliant group of young people who all had caring responsibilities.

Although only a small group, we heard some really clear themes which included:

- NHS staff to be more aware of young carers
- The transition from child to adult services was not always smooth with people describing themselves as being left 'in limbo'
- They needed to know about the mental health support available to them
- They often felt socially isolated and needed respite
- Financial support would be welcomed

Carers told us that they are so busy focussing on someone else they lose their own identity. Carers asked for help to 'find who they are'.



Young Carers shared their powerful stories with us

All of the Carers we spoke to had experienced bullying at school. One child told us this had continued for 5 years until he felt "suicidal".

Professionals told us they had seen an increase in the number of young carers who were suffering from depression with many of them self harming and self medicating.

We presented the feedback to Medway Council. As a result, their experiences have directly shaped the Council's Medway Joint Carers Strategy.

Carers told us they felt stressed and anxious "most of the time".



Ensuring stroke survivors are at the centre of decisions to change services

Stroke services in Kent & Medway have been under review for several years and we have been involved in the discussions to ensure the voice of all communities is heard and acted upon. Our role in a public consultation is to scrutinise the process to ensure people were involved and listened to. This year a decision was finally made to create three hyper acute stroke units.

During the subsequent Judicial Review, our scrutiny was reviewed by the Judicial process and mentioned in their overall findings which upheld the consultation decision.

Since then, we have worked with the Stroke Association and Healthwatch Kent to create the Stroke Advisory Group.

The Group, which is made up of people who have had a stroke and their families has been travelling to the sites of the three new Hyper Acute Stroke Units to work with professionals to ensure the needs of patients, carers and families is incorporated into the design for the new service.

They have visited two sites before Covid hit, talking about the importance of emotional support to help patients and families deal with the impact of a stroke. They felt this support was vital to be available in the immediate days following a stroke as well as during the rehabilitation phase.



The stroke survivors and carers were able to help us understand what is important for people using stroke services. Louise Ward, Stroke Clinical Project Manager

Long Term Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

Highlights



More than 290 people shared their experiences of children & young people services with Healthwatch Medway & Healthwatch Kent



We facilitated 8 focus groups reaching different groups of children and young people in Medway & Kent



117 people told us what was important to them about children and young peoples' services

NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the 'Long Term Plan' in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years. Healthwatch launched a countrywide campaign to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

Working with Healthwatch Kent we asked young people #WhatWouldYouDo to improve the NHS locally.

This is what they told us:

- They want their opinions and thoughts to be valued and respected
- They want to be involved in decisions about them
- They wanted gaps and inconsistencies in services to be addressed

We shared our findings with the Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group who said "It will contribute towards building a robust children's strategy"

Our recommendations included :

- A Children & Young Peoples' strategy should be produced together with young people and parents
- Continuity of care should be addressed
- No jargon and easy to understand care pathways
- Reduce waiting times especially for SEN services

We remain involved in the discussions about improving services for young people



"I feel that I haven't been supported and listened to so far".

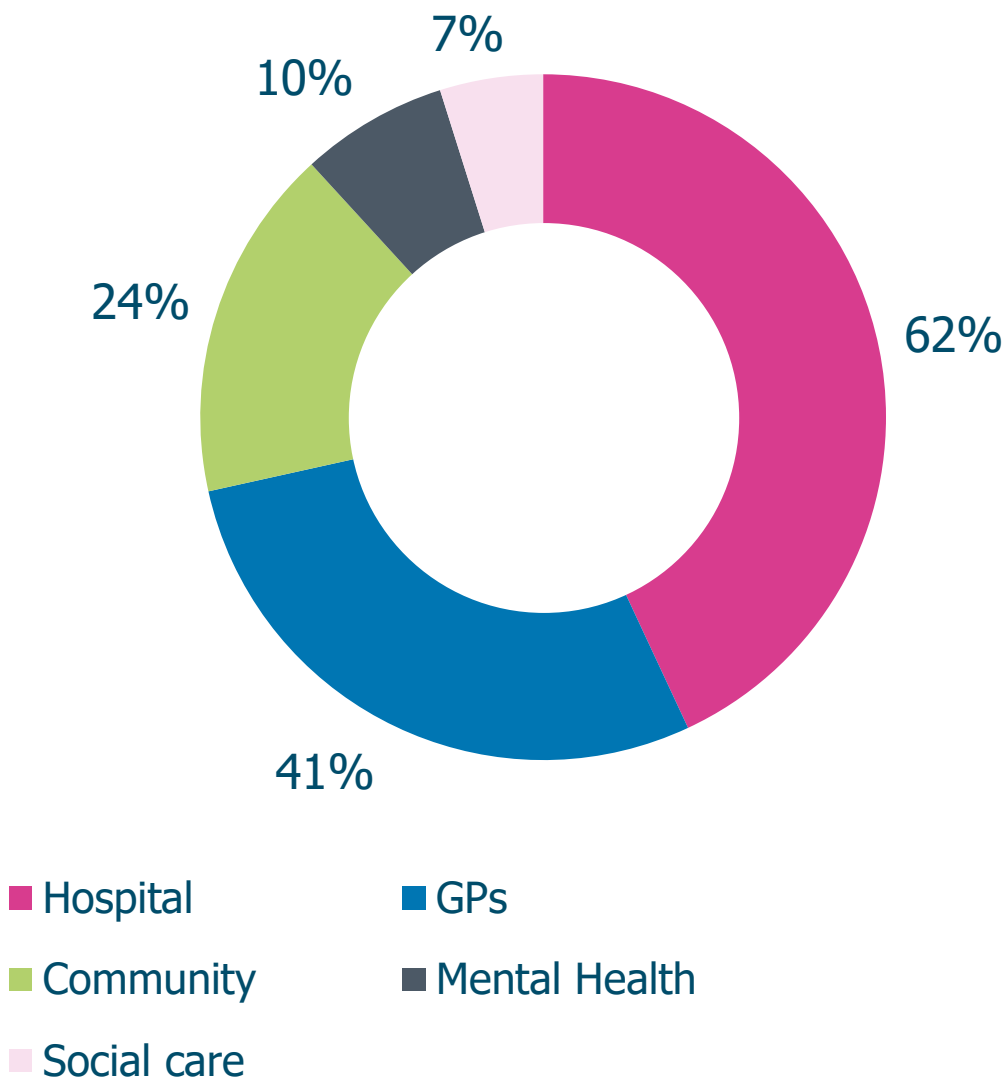
Helping you find the answers



Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

- This year we helped 549 people get the advice and information they need by:
- Answering people’s queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
 - Talking to people at community events.

Here are some of the areas that people asked about.



Ensuring people get all the support they need

Jane was referred to us by fellow Better Together Consortium organisation, Medway Voluntary Action.

She was mostly house bound due to a series of medical conditions and was in regular pain. Chatting to Jane, she told us about difficulties she was having with her GP surgery.

We supported her to make a complaint to her GP surgery which was then addressed and

resolved. To support her pain, we secured an appointment with the Pain Clinic.

Talking in detail with Jane, enabled us to understand her whole situation. By referring Jane to Citizen's Advice we were able to help her resolve her financial issues. We were also able to chat to her partner to ensure he had access to support for him as a Carer.

Thanks to this one phone call to our Helpline, we were able to help Jane with a whole host of issues and ensure she was able to get the support that she needed. This is making a big difference to her wellbeing.

“Thank you. You’ve made such a difference for me and my family.”





Giving people confidence

Often people need some advice and support to build their understanding and confidence about their rights.

Anita called us worried about her Dad who was being discharged without any adaptations being made at home to cope with his mobility issues. Her Dad hadn't been assessed.

Thanks to the information we were able to provide, Anita felt more confident in her conversation with the hospital and secured an assessment.

Her Dad was successfully discharged following an assessment and all the adaptations were in place to keep him independent at home.



Looking at the whole story

Many people call us with complex issues and it is important that we take the time to understand the full picture.

Gemma came to talk to us during one of our regular visits to local events. She was having issues with her GP and her Dad's consultant and wasn't sure what to try next. We put her in touch with Citizen's Advice and Imago who were both able to resolve the issues with their Blue Badge. We also made sure she was connected with PoHWer who could offer advocacy and Carers FIRST to ensure Gemma was getting support as a carer too. All from just one phone call!



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health or social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

Website: www.healthwatchmedway.com

Telephone: 0800 135 656

Email: enquiries@healthatchmedway.com

Volunteers



At Healthwatch Medway we are supported by 9 volunteers who help us find out what people think is working, and what people would like to improve, to services in their communities.

This year our volunteers have:

- Raised awareness of the work we do at events, in the community and with health and care services.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.
- Listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.

Graham enjoys speaking up for those who aren't usually heard

Reverend Graham has been involved with Healthwatch Medway since we started in Jan 2019 and now Chairs the Steering Group which is made up of other volunteers and decides what we prioritise.

Graham is a strong advocate for people who may be vulnerable, or whose voice is not normally heard by decision makers, and helps us to make recommendations for improvement based on feedback we've heard from Medway residents.

Talking about the year ahead, Graham said, "It will be great to visit the care homes and discover how they have managed during the dreadful Covid-19 pandemic. I want to discover how they managed the challenge of caring for vulnerable people and supporting their families during the lock-down period. I am sure there are valuable lessons to be learnt for the future."

Eunice has been visiting Care Homes

Together with other volunteers, we visited a total of 24 Care Homes in Medway this year talking to residents and staff about their experiences.

"I really enjoyed the visits and working with other volunteers. I had a steep learning curve and now I am looking forward to being part of more visits to Care Homes this year"

"I am also very lucky to represent Healthwatch at the Kent & Medway Health & Wellbeing Boards which cover the whole remit of health and wellbeing across all sections of our communities."

"Overall, I enjoy being involved with an organisation designed to appreciate the complexities of our NHS, yet presents an informed, empathetic face for patients."



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, we'd love to hear from you

Website: www.healthwatchmedway.com

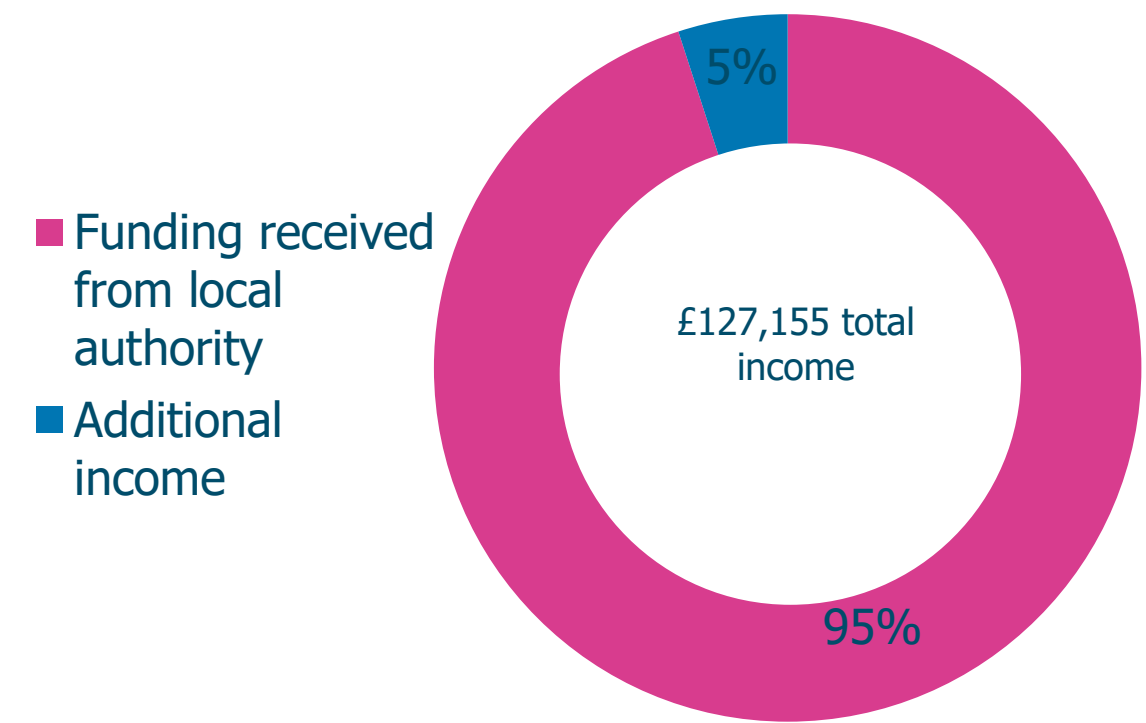
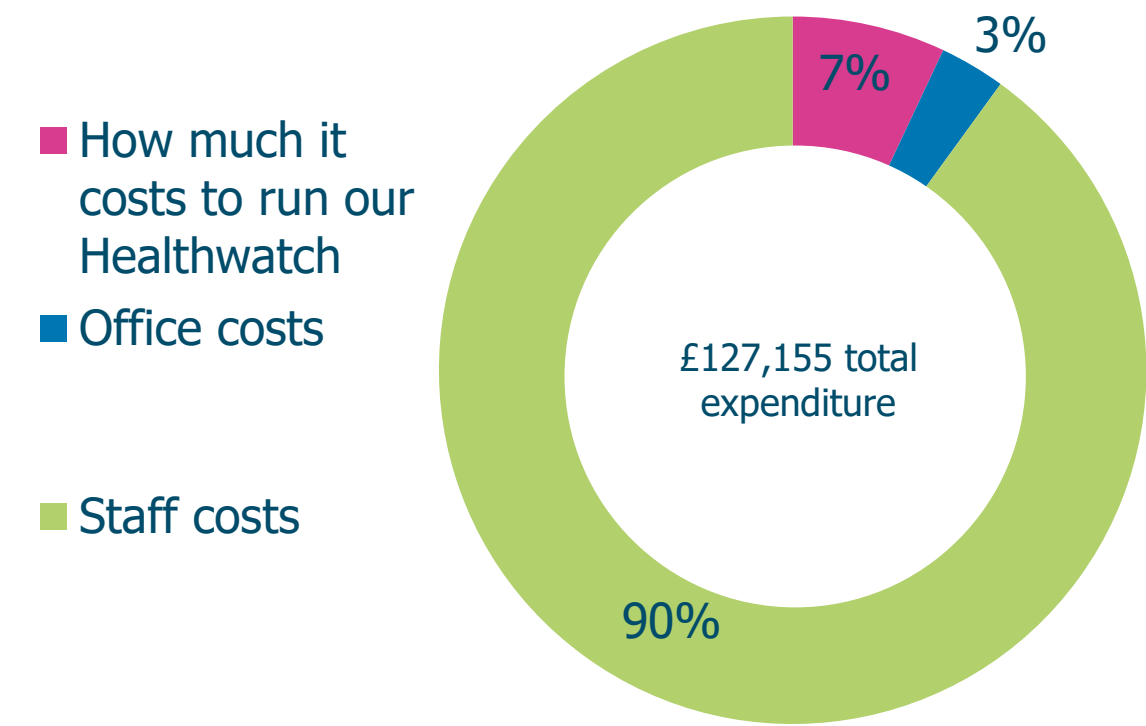
Telephone: 0800 136 656

Email: enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com

Finances



We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £127,155



Our plans for next year



What does the future hold?

We don't have a crystal ball...

Back in February we visited 5 locations across Medway to ask people what they wanted us to focus on this year. 203 people voted and that gave us a lovely list of priorities for the year. And then Covid happened!

We still hope we can complete these priorities but we also know that the whole world has shifted and we need to respond to that.

For the time being we will continue with our Covid priorities which are:

- Understanding how people are affected by the virus and ensuring decision makers hear their voice
- Supporting NHS volunteers to free up NHS staff
- Giving Care Homes a voice
- Working to reach Hidden Carers to ensure they know about the support available

If the world gets back to some sort of normal, we will revisit the issues that the public voted for in February which include:

- Homelessness
- Care Homes & Domiciliary Care
- Carers
- GP Access
- Community Mental Health

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- Our amazing staff and volunteers.
- The voluntary organisations that have supported us and contributed to our work, particularly members of the Medway Better Together Consortium.



Healthwatch Medway
5a New Road Avenue
Chatham
ME4 6BB

www.healthwatchmedway.com

t: 0800 135 656

e: enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com

 [HWMedway](#)

 [Healthwmedway](#)

Engaging Kent CiC is the legal entity which holds the Healthwatch Medway Contract.

+ sue@engagingkent.co.uk

+ www.engagingkent.co.uk

+ The Stables Little Coldharbour Farm, Tong Lane Lamberhurst,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN3 8AD

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