

Together

**we're making health
and social care better**

healthwatch
Medway

Annual Report 2022–23



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"In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

Message from our Chair

This year has been, to use footballing terminology, one of two halves.

The latter part of 2022 saw the implementation of the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board. Healthwatch Medway were part of the formulation of that board, and it was vital for us to be involved in that process. One of the core values of Healthwatch is to be able to take the insight and feedback you give us and feed it back into the decision makers. Having that connection with the ICB (as it is now known) is key to making sure we let those at the “top table” know what is occurring.



**Rev Graham M Trice,
Healthwatch Medway Chair**

Prior to July and since the turn of the year, Healthwatch Medway has been back doing what it has always done. Talking to members of the public and finding out what matters to them, what is important.

Some of our volunteers, myself included, were part of a project working alongside Healthwatch Kent, to go into care homes across the area and chat with management, staff and residents about the Enhanced Health In Care Home plan, which is based on how local GP practices and Primary Care Networks now supply all sorts of services to care home facilities.

We held our second Healthwatch Recognition Awards in late March 2023. Close to 200 people joined us including volunteers, community groups and professionals to recognise and praise those who had gone above and beyond in this year. It was again a special evening for us all and was very much enjoyed by all who attended.

This report gives you a snapshot of just part of our year. We hope you find it helpful and enjoy reading the rest of this report.

Do get in touch if you would like more information, or if you want to work with us this year. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Every blessing
Rev. Graham M Trice



“Healthwatch Medway have assisted us in recruiting patient participants for a number of research projects relating to evidence-based improvement in healthcare. We particularly value their support in reaching a wide-diversity of patient participants which would otherwise be hard to achieve solely via an online campaign.”
Healthcare Research Partner

About us

Healthwatch Medway 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.

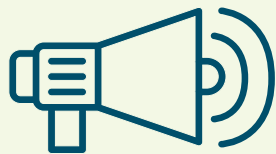


Our values are:

- **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.

Highlights from our year

Reaching out



947 people

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

19,714 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.

Making a difference to care

We published

5 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

How Covid Can Change Your Life

which highlighted the struggles people face living with long COVID



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

8

outstanding volunteers who gave up their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received









£121,555 which is **the same as** the previous year.

We currently employ

2.6 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Summer '22	 <p>We met with Kent University to discuss the recruitment of student Volunteers to providing training and experience for students in the Health and Social Care field</p>	 <p>We held an event in partnership with voluntary sector organisations to raise awareness of the support available in Medway</p>
Autumn '22	 <p>We supported Medway Council in gathering feedback around short term care after leaving hospital, speaking to residents and healthcare professionals</p>	 <p>The Healthwatch 'Change Makers' volunteer recruitment campaign launched, with advertisements uploaded to MVA, DO IT and Kent Partnership websites</p>
Winter '22	 <p>We teamed up with Healthwatch Kent to run a project on Enhanced Health in Care Homes, supporting proactive care centred on the needs of individual residents, their families and care home staff</p>	 <p>We provided reporting to Healthwatch England, who urged the Government to act after a 452% increase in feedback from people struggling to see an NHS dentist.</p>
Spring '23	 <p>We began planning a project to evaluate four key organisations providing voluntary and community support in Medway, to showcase their value to residents and support their continued funding</p>	 <p>We have elevated our outreach to speak to more people than we have ever before, and began the inclusion of a dedicated Mental Health voice with the support of MEGAN CIC https://megancic.org.uk/</p>

10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

How have we made care better, together?

Young Carers

Healthwatch Medway recommended that young carers should be included in the development of the Carers Strategy to make sure their voice is heard and facilitated focus groups to support this.



GP Access during the pandemic

We highlighted lack of access to GPs for those who had no access to technology and the information around visiting the surgery, and supported surgeries to provide this information

Hearing Impairment

We highlighted the importance of an interpreter's being available for those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, when visiting the GP, A&E and when in Hospital



Mental Health Assessment and Counselling

We spoke to people diagnosed with a mental health condition for feedback around a new proposed service providing tailored support for Mental Health Care in A&E

NHS dentistry

We continued to voice public concerns that improvements to NHS dentistry are too slow, leaving thousands of people in pain.





Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services and help them improve.

Evaluating the wellbeing navigation service

In Medway, Wellbeing Navigators supports hundreds of people to get the support that they need. They are commissioned by Medway Council. We were asked to gather feedback from people about their feelings about the service.

The feedback we gathered from people who have benefited from the Wellbeing Navigation service provided by Imago, as well as those who have not yet used it, has helped to inform the Council's decisions about the future of the service.

We spoke to 308 people and listened to their thoughts including people who have used the service as well as professionals who work in Medway.

Providing a valuable service

Our findings built a picture of 'why' people are using the Wellbeing Navigation service (i.e., are they in need of information and guidance, emotional and practical support, or help to access a range of community, health and social care options?), what unique value the service has, and to understand how wellbeing navigation helps people overcome barriers to accessing care and address health inequalities.

We found that :



- 93% felt that the service was good or excellent, and had a positive or very positive impact on their or their loved one's health and wellbeing
- People mentioned difficulty managing the application process for Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance and a Blue Badge, with some not being aware they could access these benefits, or mobility aids until their Wellbeing Navigator informed them
- 58% told us that the service had made them feel supported

What difference will this make?

With the evidence gathered from our report, Medway Council were able to support the case for the wellbeing navigation service to be recommissioned, which means that the service continues to provide support to residents of Medway.

The report also highlighted where improvements can be made when referring people to the service. You can find out more about the wellbeing navigators here: <https://www.imago.community/Adult-Support/Medway-Wellbeing-Navigation-Service>



"I was upset, they helped me tremendously, can't praise them enough. I wouldn't be on the right benefits if it wasn't for these lovely, kind, understanding people."

Female age 55-64, from Rochester

Shaping the Medway Oral Health Strategy

Previously, Healthwatch Medway had highlighted a year-on-year increase of in the number of tooth extractions being carried out on children due to tooth decay and recommended that the Medway Council Public Health Team co-create oral and dental health messages in partnership with communities.

One hundred people talked to Healthwatch Medway about NHS Dentists. Over half of them told us they either were not able to register with an NHS Dentist or had struggled to get an appointment.

Some of them were waiting a very long time to see a Dentist, and many talked about the difficulties they faced trying to afford to pay for an NHS Dentist. Our findings suggested that the health inequalities that already existed for people had worsened due to the COV-ID pandemic.

The Public Health Team worked with Healthwatch Medway, Adult Social Care and local children's nurseries to identify where and how support can be delivered.

What difference will this make?

All of our findings were used as part of the formation of the Medway Oral Health Strategy, which aimed to reduce the health inequalities that we had identified

Highlights from the strategy include:

1. Talking to children and families during holiday club activities about oral health
2. Exploring supervised teeth brushing sessions in schools and care homes
3. Water refill stations across Medway to reduce the need for people to buy high sugar drinks, such as fruit juice and fizzy pop



"My concern is, especially at this difficult time is that, if they can't fit in my 10-month-old for a check-up, I won't be able to find any other practice to fit our family in."

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

Healthwatch Medway shared with the NHS experiences young people had shared with them about the difficulties faced when accessing mental healthcare during their transition to adulthood.

The NHS Kent and Medway ICB used this information to support decision making around the transformation of local mental health services and have since employed a dedicated team member to focus on bringing the experiences of children and young adults to the table.

Getting services to involve the public



Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

Healthwatch Medway is working with Local Pharmacy Committee on a project aiming to speak to as many people as possible, initially in Chatham and then across the rest of Medway. Both organisations want to hear what members of the public currently used their local pharmacies for and what they would want from them in terms of additional services.

Improving care and communication over time



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

Healthwatch Medway is continuing to work with several PPG's (Patient Participation Groups) within GP Practices across the area. The aim is to support proactive PPGs, as well as being a critical friend and helping strengthen the lines of communication between the Practice and their patients, and to encourage use of a variety of means to reach out to and hear from the widest possible audience



Hearing from all communities

Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Attending various community events including the Chatham Over 55's fair, Medway Neurological Network World Parkinson's Day event and the DWP Cost of Living event in Chatham
- Sharing regular feedback with Medway Council and the NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board when reaching out to local community groups, to ensure opinions represent the diversity of residents in Medway,

Afghan resettlement scheme

The UK formally opened the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) on 6 January 2022, which prioritised:

- those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law
- vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk.

Healthwatch Medway was the single point of contact for voluntary organisations in Medway, working in partnership with Medway Council's Afghan resettlement team.

One of the families resettled in Medway had trouble when registering for local primary care services. Healthwatch Medway picked this up and reached out to a local committee who were aware of similar issues in other areas and supported those families under the ACRS to register with services local to them.





Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people access NHS dentistry

Helping Frank to manage his own blood pressure

Frank came to visit the Hypertension Heroes in Gillingham one afternoon at the Medway Afro Caribbean Association where volunteers talked to him about the importance of healthy blood pressure.

Whilst chatting with Frank, the Hypertension Heroes realised that he was struggling with his vision and wouldn't be able to take his own blood pressure because he couldn't read the blood pressure monitor.

Hypertension Heroes work in partnership with Healthwatch Medway. Together they would usually encourage people like Frank who need help to monitor their blood pressure, to their local pharmacy. However, in Frank's case, he struggles with his mobility so getting to a pharmacy would be a challenge for him.

Frank's partner offered to take his blood pressure, but Frank was keen to know how to do it himself and to have his own independence.

Healthwatch Medway work closely with Kent Association for the Blind as part of the Medway Better Together Consortium. Healthwatch Medway took Frank's story to Kent Association for the Blind and discussed our desire to enable him to take control of his own blood pressure monitoring.

Kent Association for the Blind prioritised Frank's referral and visited him at home to assess how his sight is affecting his day-to-day life. As a result, Frank now has his own blood pressure monitor that has a tactile markers to help him identify the right buttons and enable him to take his own blood pressure. It then speaks his readings out loud.

The team from KAB spent time with Frank to help him learn how to use the monitor and ensure he is confident to do it himself.

Since then, Frank has visited the Hypertension Heroes to proudly show off his new monitor and Frank is religiously taking his blood pressure regularly.



"I cannot thank you enough. I will never forget what you have done for me."

Find out more about the Hypertension Heroes here: <https://www.ek360.co.uk/hypertensionheroes>

Find out more about Medway Afro Caribbean Association here: <https://macacharity.org.uk/>

Find out more about Kent Association for the Blind here: <https://www.kab.org.uk/>





Volunteering

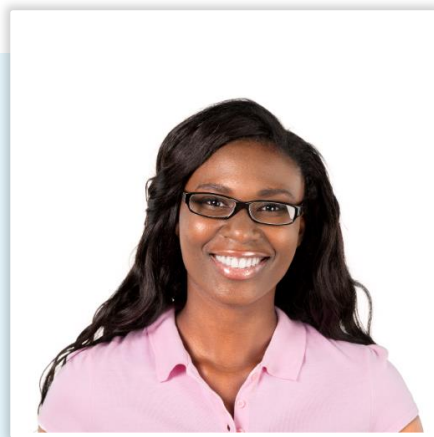
We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local care homes to help them improve
- Attended regional Health and Social Care meetings and events

Katherine

"I have been volunteering with Healthwatch Medway since 2021. I thoroughly enjoy being part of the team, making sure that we focus on the most important issues for the local Medway residents. Giving back to the health service after they gave so much to us during COVID, and continue to experience such pressures, is important to me.



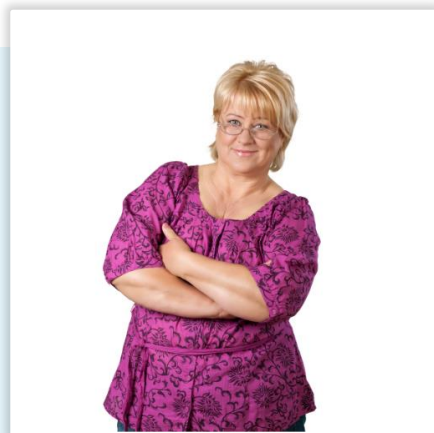
Nic

"I help out the SIRS [*Signposting, Information and Research*] team with data entry. I have volunteered in many places, but this is the first time I have ever felt so welcome and at home. This is really a great place to volunteer, I really enjoy my time working here."



Jill

"During my volunteering I have visited a wide range of Care Homes, General Hospitals, Mental Hospitals, Hospices, Community Events, Coffee Caravans (for isolated communities) and I have learnt a great deal about the issues faced by service users both positive and negative. It is very rewarding to know that by listening to people you can play a part in highlighting and improving their experience of Health and Social care to the benefit of all of us."



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



www.healthwatchmedway.com



0800 136 656



Volunteer@healthwatchmedway.com

Finance and future priorities

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	
Funding received from local authority	£121,555	Expenditure on pay	£86,786
Additional income	£208	Non-pay expenditure	£26,730
Total income	£121,763	Total expenditure	£113,516

Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work to tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Monitoring the changes to Primary Care services, and the effect on the population
2. Ensuring that changes do not disadvantage groups of people and create health inequalities, as well as addressing any inequalities where we see them
3. Recruit more volunteers, and lay members to our Steering Group



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Medway is hosted by EK360

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 four members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met four times and made decisions on matters such as the focus for our public engagement and local priorities. The minutes from all our Steering Group meetings can be found on our website.

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 insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 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 will publish it on our website and in our newsletter, and we have printed copies available to anyone who wants it.

Responses to recommendations

We had zero providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so 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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area for example we take information to Medway Council's Children and Young People and Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers at the NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board. For example, we have regular meetings with the Directors of Patient Experience at Medway NHS Foundation Trust and SECamb, and with the Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made three Enter and View visits. We made a number of recommendations or actions as a result of this report

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Amherst Court, Chatham – Care Home	Enhanced Health in Care Homes Project	Fed into report due to be published July 2023
Sherwood House, Rochester – Care Home	Enhanced Health in Care Homes Project	Fed into report due to be published July 2023
Grace Manor. Gillingham – Care Home	Enhanced Health in Care Homes Project	Fed into report due to be published July 2023

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Medway is represented on the Medway Council Health and Wellbeing Board by Phill Thorne, Community Engagement Lead.

Healthwatch Medway is represented on NHS Kent & Medway Integrated Care Partnerships and Integrated Care Boards by Emma-Sue Willows, Strategy and Intelligence Lead

Emma-Sue is also a Member of Medway Council's Children and Young People and Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees.



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