



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch East Sussex

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"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

In the past twelve months we have witnessed change almost everywhere. We've seen a new Government, revised plans for NHS England and the Department for Health and Social Care, the Integrated Care Board being asked to reduce expenditure significantly, and proposed devolution and local government re-organisation.

These changes are going to impact our future health and care landscape, but I am confident we here at Healthwatch will adapt, as we have in the past. We will continue to use our membership of the Sussex Health and Care Assembly and East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure public voice remains central to decision-making, whilst continuing to support patients to navigate local services.

Working collaboratively has been at the core of our work programme over the last year, both nationally, and locally with our Healthwatch colleagues in Brighton & Hove and West Sussex. The latter resulted in the three of us winning Healthwatch England's Impact of the Year Award for our work on Non-Emergency Patient Transport, which is hopefully leading to a better experience for service users.

As you will read in this year's report, we continue to make a difference, having worked especially hard to reach out to those communities whose voice often goes unheard, including prison residents and people using food banks.

It is pleasing to conclude by saying East Sussex County Council have extended our Healthwatch contract for a further two years, so a big thank to the County Council, and of course to our volunteers, our wonderful staff, our management team and my fellow board members.



"We are grateful to everyone who shares their experiences and views with Healthwatch and to national, regional and local health, care and voluntary organisations for working with us to support the wellbeing of people in East Sussex."

Keith Stevens, Chair of East Sussex Community Voice, delivering Healthwatch East Sussex

About us

Healthwatch East Sussex is your local health and social care champion.

We use our membership of the Sussex Health and Care Assembly and East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure decision-makers use your feedback to improve care.

We share our insight with the Care Quality Commission, Safeguarding Adults Board, NHS Trusts, County Council, and individual service providers such as GPs and pharmacies.

We help people find reliable and trustworthy information and advice via our Information & Signposting Service.



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 4,000 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 9 staff and our work is supported by our 28 volunteers.

Reaching out:



3,586 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

566 people directly contacted us and **25,654** used our website for advice and information on topics such as finding an NHS dentist, registering with GPs and accessing vaccinations.

Championing your voice:



We published **35** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **ear wax treatment, oral health and dentistry, access to GPs and hospital discharge**.

Our most read report was **Impacts of changes in cost of living on health and wellbeing**, highlighting the physical and mental effects on people's lives.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **East Sussex County Council**. In 2024/25 we received **£364,470**, which is the same as the previous year.

Our partners

We've worked closely with local health and care commissioners and providers to ensure public and patient voice sits at the heart of their activity and decision-making.

East Sussex County Council

"Healthwatch East Sussex continue to play a critical role in ensuring that the voices of local communities are heard when it comes to health and social care services. Over the course of 2024/25, their ongoing commitment to advocating for the needs of residents, particularly in terms of access to care, service quality, and patient experiences, has informed existing practice and new service initiatives.

The East Sussex Care Homes Group welcomed findings from the Healthwatch Oral health in Care Homes and Discharge to Assess reports. Healthwatch are also helping shape current health and social care developments such as the Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams.

Their work not only empowers individuals but also supports the development of practice to ensure better, more responsive care for all in East Sussex."

NHS Sussex

"The partnership between the NHS and Healthwatch East Sussex is built on trust, shared values, and a shared commitment to putting people first.

By working together, we ensure that the voices of local communities are heard, valued, and used to shape services that truly meet their needs.

A great example of this is our joint work to improve how we hear from and work with children and young people—including co-producing an online platform where young people can connect, share ideas, and give feedback on NHS services.

This kind of collaboration strengthens our ability to deliver compassionate, high-quality care—making a real difference to the health and wellbeing of all young people in East Sussex."

Our partners

We've worked closely with local health and care commissioners and providers to ensure public and patient voice sits at the heart of their activity and decision-making.

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

"Healthwatch East Sussex has continued to support East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust during 2024/25, through various activities such as Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE) and providing us with insights through specific feedback on the experiences of patients, carers, relatives and local communities who engage with our services.

This information has been invaluable in helping us to shape and develop these services and we deeply value our ongoing relationship with Healthwatch and the value this adds to our work.

We look forward to working closely with Healthwatch East Sussex into 2025/26 and participating in the planning and delivering of further activities to support the development of healthcare in the area."

Healthwatch England

"The feedback local Healthwatch hear in their communities and share with us at Healthwatch England is invaluable, building a picture of what it's like to use health and care services nationwide.

Local people's experiences help us understand where we – and decision makers – must focus and highlight issues that might otherwise go unnoticed.

We can then make recommendations that will change care for the better, both locally and across the nation."

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 East Sussex. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Engagement with patients helped our local hospital trust understand the potential impacts of changes to paediatric services at Eastbourne District General Hospital.



We used insight from our Listening Tour to call on County Council transport planners to consider health and care services when developing their Local Transport Plan.

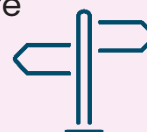


Summer

Your feedback highlighted barriers to patient choice and the 'right to choose'. Our insight supported NHS Sussex to review patient-facing information.



Information and signposting sessions at local events supported ethnically diverse and migrant communities to navigate health and care services.



Autumn

As members of the East Sussex Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) steering group, we fed your feedback on pharmacy into its development.



The East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) review into audiology services made recommendations based on insight we shared.



Winter

NHS England updated their 'Find breast screening services' website to include East Sussex services after we flagged these were missing.



We collaborated with the new Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) provider to ensure their website and leaflet were patient friendly and accessible.



Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Sussex were heard at Integrated Care System (ICS) level and influenced decisions made about services delivered across the county.

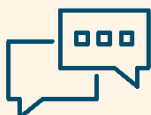
This year, we've worked with Healthwatch Brighton & Hove and Healthwatch West Sussex to achieve the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Funding secured from our Integrated Care Board (NHS Sussex) meant we could join important decision-making meetings to independently scrutinise services, speak up on behalf of patients and share their views. NHS Sussex leaders welcomed our insight and responded to our challenges. After highlighting the need for clearer communications, they published information about changes designed to improve access to [NHS dentistry](#) and to explain the different staff roles in [GP surgeries](#).

The big conversation:



During 2024/25, the three Healthwatch teams delivered 12 short monthly digital polls to capture people's views on a range of topics. We heard from 3,418 people, including 953 from East Sussex.

Healthwatch East Sussex led polls covering eConsult, Hospital Discharge, Cancer Screening and Vaccinations. The results are available on our website and have provided important intelligence to those working to improve patient flows from hospital, increase awareness of and access to cancer screening, and support the delivery of COVID-19, Flu and other vaccinations.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



We collaborated to use patient feedback to influence the re-commissioning of the new Sussex Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS). Patient views were included in the service specification, helping to deliver improved communications, clearer eligibility and signposting to alternatives.

Our work was recognised by receiving the 2024 [Healthwatch England Impact Award](#), the first ever joint winners.

During 2025, we will be seeking experiences of people using the NEPTS service, delivered by the new provider (EMED) from April 2025.

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 East Sussex 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.

Findings from our survey into people's experiences of ear wax services supported NHS Sussex and the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee identify responses to the challenges some people face accessing free NHS treatment. We shared how people's quality of life, education and employment could be affected and the financial barriers of 'paid for' services.

Getting services to involve the public



Involving local people in service development helps improve care for everyone.

We contributed to an East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust event that brought together teams from across the Trust and other healthcare partners to share and compare examples of how patient feedback is gathered and used to inform service delivery and development. This raised operational awareness of the value of patient experience and techniques to capture it.

Improving care over time



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

In 2024, our survey on Cost-of-Living highlighted how people's wellbeing, behaviour and use of healthcare services were negatively affected by increases in daily living costs. Thanks to what people shared, we've been able to give valuable insight to the East Sussex Financial Inclusion Steering Group, supported their creation of patient-friendly resources, and updated our own, to help people access financial and other forms of support.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if service providers don't know what's wrong. Listening to your experiences shines a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback across 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

Healthwatch East Sussex Listening Tour

Over the last year we adapted the approach to our Healthwatch Listening Tour, visiting three areas of East Sussex rather than one, to increase our reach and understand health and care issues across more communities.

During 2024/25, our Listening Tour focused on Wealden District, Lewes and the Havens, and Hastings Borough, hearing from 197 people.

What did we do?

We used a variety of activities to hear people's experiences of accessing and using health and care services. We visited a range of community groups across the three areas, held stakeholder events, delivered Information & Signposting sessions and shared a Listening Tour survey in person and online.

Key things we heard:

GP appointments are often difficult to access. People shared concerns over long waits, challenges using online booking systems and barriers to booking appointments in-person. We heard concerns as to whether digital platforms are triaged by clinicians.

Eligibility criteria for NHS patient transport is tight. People reliant on fewer public transport options outside major towns may struggle to attend medical appointments or return home from hospital.

Having caring responsibilities, a disability or multiple conditions were barriers to accessing healthcare, including attending appointments.

The experiences of people living across East Sussex has shaped the Healthwatch work programme for the year ahead, including focusing on non-emergency patient transport. Our Listening Tours strengthened our relationships with local groups and organisations, ensuring that we can continue to work with and hear from a range of different people.

What difference did this make?

We raised awareness of the East Sussex Carers Card and national guidance on discounted hospital parking for carers attending regular outpatient appointments or visiting unwell patients to reduce barriers to travel.

Our findings supported East Sussex County Council officers to work with NHS Estates teams to identify locations to install real time bus information in larger health service settings, including hospitals and clinics in 2025/26. NHS staff will also be encouraged to share the [East Sussex interactive bus map](#).

Listening to your experiences

Oral Health in Care Homes

Care home residents currently waiting to access NHS services would welcome oral health care from dental therapists in their care home.

Access to dentistry is one of the most common issues we hear about, including in our engagement with adults living in care homes. In 2024, NHS Sussex commissioned a pilot to explore use of dental therapists to provide routine oral health checks and dentistry services for care home residents, linking remotely where appropriate with dentists using small camera technology.

What did we do?

We carried out Enter and View visits to ten care homes across East Sussex to understand people's experiences of oral health care, including their access to dentistry, and to seek their views about the potential use of dental therapists to provide oral health checks and dental care in care homes.

Key things we heard:



33%

of residents reported problems with their teeth, including mouth pain or needing new dentures.

59%

of care home managers stated that it was difficult or very difficult for residents to see a dentist.

69%

of residents would be happy to see a dental therapist, including using a camera to link to a dentist (where necessary).

We heard how oral health impacted people's physical and mental wellbeing. Most residents we spoke to who had seen a dentist in the last year had done so privately, whilst those requiring or seeking NHS services often faced long waits, including access to the NHS Special Care Dental Service.

What difference did this make?

Our Enter and View report provided the first evidence of care home residents' views about the use of dental therapists providing oral health care. Our work contributed to the development of the NHS pilot in West Sussex, which could be a future model for domiciliary dentistry across the county, supporting increased frequency of oral health and dental checks in care homes.

Listening to your experiences

Hospital Discharge to D2A beds in care homes.

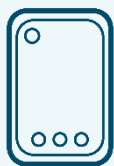
Patients discharged from hospital to 'discharge to assess' (D2A) beds in care homes are still not being involved enough in their discharge planning.

Discharge to Assess is a national NHS model where planning, assessment, and arranging ongoing care takes place in the D2A setting rather than in hospital. We were hearing that patients were waiting a long time in hospital for transfer to a D2A bed, leaving them at risk of deconditioning and loss of function.

What did we do?

We carried out Enter and View visits to ten care homes across East Sussex funded by the NHS Better Care Fund to provide D2A beds. We spoke to twenty-five residents about their experiences of hospital discharge, and to ten care home managers about their views of the local D2A scheme.

Key things we heard:



100%

of residents in a D2A bed stated that their hospital stay was unplanned.

72%

of residents in a D2A bed stated that hospital staff did not clearly explain their discharge plan.

90%

of care home managers assessed that residents lost independent living skills whilst in hospital.

"The staff are lovely, but I'm too young to be in a residential home with activities geared to older people"

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We found most residents discharged to D2A beds remained in residential care. The likelihood of a person returning home increased where an allocated social worker supported residents in D2A beds. Our report recommended more resource be focused on reablement and rehabilitation support to maximise the numbers of people able to return home.

What difference did this make?

Our findings showed that using dedicated social workers and occupational therapists often benefits those in D2A beds. Some monies from the Better Care Fund have been allocated locally to employ an additional occupational therapist to assess and support residents discharged to D2A beds in 2025/26.

Listening to your experiences

Young Healthwatch

Young Healthwatch is made up of a group of young volunteers, working to ensure the voice of young people is heard by decision makers.

Our Young Healthwatch volunteers support our wider Healthwatch projects, participate in meetings and events to share their views and experiences, and undertake their own projects focused on improving health and care services used by children and young people (CYP).

GP Accreditation

We worked in Hastings to develop a new CYP accreditation to recognise GP practices that were welcoming and accessible to children and young people. The accreditation criteria reflected CYP identified priorities, including availability of information, communication and suitability of practice settings.

Our accreditation was piloted in Hastings. Three practices used our guidance to make their practices more accessible and welcoming to young people. We now hope to roll the accreditation out across practices in East Sussex.

Paediatric Services

Young Healthwatch volunteers visited Friston paediatric department and the paediatric section of the Emergency Department at Eastbourne District General Hospital, speaking to staff and sharing their views on how settings and services may be improved for young people.

We also shared our findings with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) to further their understanding of paediatric services locally.

Independent Youth Panel

We worked with NHS Sussex and their Youth Consultants to develop a new online youth panel for young people aged 13 – 24 in Sussex. The panel gives young people across Sussex a dedicated space to share their ideas, views and experiences with health and care services: bit.ly/3GSUttd.



“We are delighted to have achieved the Children and Young People Friendly GP Accreditation. This recognition reflects our commitment to making the practice more welcoming and accessible for young people” – Station Practice (Hastings)

Hearing from communities

We're here for all residents of East Sussex. 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:

- Providing Information and Signposting sessions in Lewes Prison, at food banks across the county, and health and wellbeing drop-ins.
- Attending lunch clubs, dementia cafes, men's sheds, over-50s clubs, community networks and open-mic events across the county.
- Using our website, social media, newsletter and e-bulletins to gather feedback on services and issues.



Hearing from communities

Increasing awareness of financial support to access health and care services.

We heard about low levels of awareness of the support mechanisms available to help people to access health and care services.

We used feedback on 'gaps' in information gathered during visits to community food projects to produce a short hard-copy guide containing key information about key health and care services and financial support schemes, especially for those who may face challenges accessing information digitally.

What difference did this make?

Our guide was welcomed by local partners and their volunteers who continue to use the guide to signpost their clients to appropriate support. Our own staff and volunteers also use the guide to assist people we meet through our engagement and outreach activities.

Helping carers to park for free at different hospital trusts across Sussex

During our Listening Tour activities, we heard about the issues faced by local carers, including the costs of parking at hospitals.

We heard that whilst a 'Carers card' allows carers to park for free at East Sussex NHS Healthcare Trusts hospitals, it did not allow them to automatically park for free at other hospitals in Sussex. We contacted University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust to ask if they could offer free parking to East Sussex carers.

What difference did this make?

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust have confirmed that East Sussex carers with a carers card who visit their hospitals can seek reduced or free parking on request. This may alleviate some of the financial burden faced by carers supporting their 'cared for' person at appointments outside East Sussex. We are now working to raise awareness of this amongst carers locally.

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 566 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Publishing guidance including advice for carers, navigating musculoskeletal services, guidance on cervical screening, and cost-of-living support.
- Regularly sharing people's feedback with NHS Sussex, Adult Social Care and Health, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust and the Care Quality Commission.
- Delivering drop-in sessions to community spaces and groups across East Sussex and to less heard groups including food bank attendees, ethnically diverse communities and residents at HMP Lewes.



Unexpected charges for an overseas visitor

A concerned enquirer contacted us to tell us that their wife, who was visiting from overseas, had received an unexpected charge after having emergency surgery during their visit.

They told us they had paid an additional charge as part of their visa application (Immigration Health Surcharge) which would make them exempt from paying for medical treatment while in the UK.

We provided details for the hospitals Overseas Visitors Manager and shared information detailing their rights to support them.

We also developed an article for our website explaining the rules around overseas visitors and charges for medical treatment to help support anyone in a similar situation in the future.



"Thank you for your help, we really appreciate it."

User Feedback

Helping patients navigate All Age Continuing Care

The family of a person in receipt of All Age Continuing Care (AACC) contacted us to tell us the care package for their daughter had suddenly changed, but they had received no information as to why.

We contacted AACC on the family's behalf to pass on their concerns and ask for feedback on how the service communicates with patients and their families. They acknowledged our request and took steps to address it.

This also highlighted the need for our team to be more aware of the AACC programme and how it works. We organised training with the AACC team for colleagues in Healthwatch across Sussex to ensure we understand their services and can support people enquiring about AACC in the future.



"This is all beyond comprehension very worrying and very stressful"

User Feedback

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 689 hours (86 days) to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in East Sussex.

This year, our volunteers:

- Visited Emergency Departments at Eastbourne and Conquest Hospitals speaking to 358 patients about their pathways to attendance.
- Participated in annual Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE) audits in local hospitals and hospices.
- Co-designed and delivered two Enter and View projects to 20 care homes exploring people's experiences of oral health and discharge to assess.
- Undertook mystery shopping of GP websites and provided feedback on the East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care and Health website.



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.

"I began volunteering with Healthwatch in June 2024. I started volunteering as I have been involved with the NHS quite a lot, and this is a good way to share my experience and occupy myself. I have been involved in activities including doing surveys in A&E, mystery shopping GP websites, and speaking to care home residents. I get to learn lots of new things in my role, and it makes me happy to meet new people and share my experiences – I'm really enjoying it now. I think volunteering is important as it supports organisations who otherwise couldn't do what they do and helps to make sure that everyone can share their experiences"

Thirugnanam (Mr. T)



"I started volunteering for Healthwatch when I moved to the area about three years ago as it is a good way to understand and get involved in local services. I am a member of my PPG (Patient Participation Group) and acted as a Patient Safety Partner with NHS Sussex, which I'm looking forward to resuming. I have been involved in many activities over the last year, including talking to patients waiting to be seen at the Emergency Department at Eastbourne District General Hospital. I also took part in an 'Enter and View' project, speaking to people discharged from hospital to care homes for further assessment. It is important for Healthwatch volunteers to get out and speak to people in the community who might not complete a survey and so are seldom heard."

Jayne



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.



www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk



0333 101 4007



volunteer@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from East Sussex County 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	£364,470	Staff pay	£295,205
Additional income (including Independent Health Complaints Advocacy – IHCAS)	£113,856	Commissioned services (including Independent Health Complaints Advocacy – IHCAS)	£106,160
		Office overheads, communication and events	£75,817
Total income	£478,326	Total Expenditure	£477,182

Additional income included:

- £2,250 received from an NHS Sussex small grants fund to support COVID-19 vaccination promotion in Hastings Borough.
- £3,000 received from an NHS Sussex small grants fund to explore women and girls' experiences of health and care services and preferences for the future.

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across Sussex each receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
To fund Healthwatch East Sussex to: • gather patient and public experiences Sussex-wide • collate patient and public experiences Sussex-wide • share insight at key Sussex-wide boards and meetings	£10,000

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in less heard communities and 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 four priorities for the next year are:

1. Listen and engage with people

We will maximise the number of people we engage virtually via our updated website, online polls and social media, and use our Listening Tour and partnerships to maximise face-to-face engagement with individuals, communities and organisations across East Sussex.

2. Understand the impact of pressures on health and care services

We will use our membership of the Sussex Health and Care Assembly and East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure the impacts of pressures are understood and responses prioritise the needs of the public and patients.

3. Embed a focus on equality and diversity in our projects and increase the voice of seldom heard communities

We will continue to prioritise our work with 'less heard' communities by offering information and signposting support to users of foodbanks and homeless people over the next 12 months.

4. Explore the effects of social determinants on health and wellbeing

We will focus on services and settings beyond the NHS and social care by exploring how insecure housing impacts people's health and wellbeing.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch East Sussex is delivered by East Sussex Community Voice CIC, Unit 31, The Old Printworks, 1 Commercial Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 3XQ.

Healthwatch East Sussex 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 Board of five members provides direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities, ensuring decisions reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. We also regularly consult our volunteers.

In 2024/25, our board met five times and made decisions on matters such as:

- setting our priorities and ensuring they aligned with our statutory functions.
- determining which projects and activities we dedicated our resources to.

We ensure there is wider public involvement in deciding our priorities by:

- Using insight from our Information & Signposting enquiries and Feedback Centre reviews to inform decisions and guide our activity.
- Gathering input from our multi-agency Healthwatch Advisory Group which meets quarterly.
- Undertaking engagement virtually and face-to-face so we hear from as many voices as possible.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure 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 and email, a web form on our website, via social media, and face-to-face at community networks, health and care events, food banks, migrant drop-ins and Lewes Prison.

We publish this annual report on our [website](#) and ensure it is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible, including East Sussex County Council, NHS Sussex and Healthwatch England.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

In 2024/25 no providers failed to 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 people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us. In East Sussex, we take information to the Health & Wellbeing Board, Health & Care Partnership Board, Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and approximately 40 other bodies and fora to support local decisions.

We take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the Sussex Integrated Care System (Sussex Health and Care). We are members of the Sussex Health & Care Assembly and alongside other Sussex Healthwatch sit on a range of thematic pan-Sussex boards and groups to champion patients' voices.

We share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch East Sussex is represented on the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board by our Chief Executive. During 2024/25 our representative has championed the voice of the public and patients in the key health and care issues that have come before the board, including:

- Monitoring the Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) which is guiding implementation of the Sussex Integrated Care Strategy 'Improving Lives Together'.
- Commenting on responses to increased demand for hospital bed capacity, Integrated Community Team development, and plans for winter pressures.
- Contributing to 'deep dives' exploring Improving Health Life Expectancy, Housing; Mental Health; Community; and Children & Young People.

Statutory statements

Sussex Health and Care Assembly

Healthwatch East Sussex is represented on the Sussex Integrated Care Partnership (Sussex Health and Care Assembly) by our Chief Executive.

Contributions over the last 12 months included:

- Sharing patient and public feedback on health and care services received by Healthwatch East Sussex.
- Monitoring implementation of the [Improving Lives Together](#) Strategy.
- Sharing Healthwatch insight on the role of housing as a social determinant of health to inform how the assembly can work to reduce the negative impact of poor housing on health outcomes.
- Contributing to the development and implementation plans for Integrated Community Teams (ICT).

Alongside the Assembly, we also regularly collaborate with the other Sussex Healthwatch to contribute to the Sussex Quality and Patient Experience Committee (QPEC) and Quality Governance Improvement Group (QGIG).

Enter and view

This year, we made two Enter and View visits to services in East Sussex and made 24 recommendations as a result of these activities.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Discharge to Assess beds (10 care homes)	To explore patient experiences of hospital discharge into 'discharge to assess' beds and care home staff experiences of the process.	Report/recommendations shared with Adult Social Care, Hospital Trust, NHS Sussex and care homes to inform review of the process.
Oral health in care homes (10 care homes)	To explore provision and effectiveness of oral health checks in care settings and to explore resident/staff perceptions on use of dental therapists to undertake routine oral health checks.	Report/recommendations shared with NHS Sussex dentistry commissioners and special care dentistry team. Dental therapist pilot now underway.

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