



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Sutton

Contents

A message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Our year in numbers	5
Working together for change	6
A year of making a difference	7
Making a difference in the community	8
Listening to your experiences	9
Hearing from all communities	12
Information and Signposting	14
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

As I look back on the past year, I remain deeply impressed by the dedication and hard work of our staff, volunteers, and trustees. Time and again, in so many ways, they demonstrate unwavering commitment to our core mission and values.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Colin Wilson, who retired last September from his role as Communications and Engagement Officer. Colin brought a strong awareness of the importance of inclusivity, both in language and behaviour—an ethos we continue to uphold. Before his departure, he also developed a communications strategy that has been expertly carried forward by Sam London, who joined us in December. Sam has been instrumental in updating our website and proactively seeking outreach opportunities to raise awareness of Healthwatch Sutton. In addition, she supports the Board and is leading projects such as our work on maternity care experiences.

Andrew McDonald, our Health Engagement and Project Officer, continues to play an invaluable role—particularly in supporting the Patient Reference Group and leading major projects. One such project involved analysing feedback from over 4,000 people about their experiences of their GP Practice, including with new online systems. Andrew also applies his qualitative research skills to lead projects using semi-structured interviews, such as gathering insights from individuals involved in adult safeguarding investigations in Sutton. Across all these activities, Andrew works closely with—and is strongly supported by—our outstanding team of volunteers. Their contributions are essential, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to each one of them.

With Sam taking on more project responsibilities, our CEO, Pete Flavell, has been able to reduce his hours slightly to focus more on strategic leadership, team guidance, and fostering key relationships with other organisations. This includes the crucial task of ensuring our findings are shared with both providers and commissioners.

We are also grateful to Lorraine Davis for the vital administrative support she provides for the team. As SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer, Alyssa Chase-Vilchez plays a key role in aligning our work with other Healthwatch organisations in South West London. She is a strong advocate at the SWL Integrated Care Board and recently published a significant report on the Accessible Information Standard, offering numerous recommendations to support its consistent and effective implementation. Alyssa has been supported in this important work by our colleague Iyinoluwa Oshinowo. Iyinoluwa has made a great contribution to SWL Healthwatch and we wish her all the best for her future career.

At the Board level, we have been delighted to welcome new trustees—Radhika Bhandari, Simon Oliver, Steve Niewiarowski, Gaynor Bray, and Judy Walsh. Their diverse skills and perspectives are already proving to be a great asset as we strive to maximise our impact and ensure the efficient use of our resources.

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to our members who attended the AGM, and to everyone who has shared their experiences of health and social care in Sutton with us. Your voices are at the heart of everything we do. In the year ahead, we remain committed to making sure those voices are heard—clearly and powerfully—for the benefit of everyone in Sutton.

Janet Wingrove, Chair, Healthwatch Sutton



About us

Healthwatch Sutton 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.

"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." Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England.

Our year in numbers

We've supported more than 5200 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 6 staff and, our work is supported by 8 volunteers.

Reaching out:



4704 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

524 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as Pathological Demand Avoidance and finding an NHS dentist.

Championing your voice:



We published 5 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like GP surgeries, Earwax services and the Accessible Information Standard.

Our most popular report was "Investigating people's experience of GP surgeries in Sutton", highlighting how a 'no one size fits all' approach is required to deliver GP services in the Borough.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by Sutton Council. In 2024/25 we received £97,318, which is 4% more than last year.

Working together for change

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

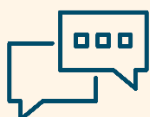
This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across South West London to achieve the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Representation on the ICS board and sub-committees provides opportunities to share patient and the public's concerns with key NHS decision-makers. We also hold the ICS to account and make sure they appropriately engage people before any big changes are made to the services they use. Colleagues from across the ICS have approached us to shape or improve their engagement plans, such as for the South West London Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment and for the South West London earwax removal pilot.

The big conversation:



We collaborated with our South West London Healthwatch colleagues on two joint engagement projects focussed on the Accessible Information Standard and community health services. We are working with ICS decision-makers to respond to what people have told us, to improve the quality, accessibility, and equality of these services for everyone.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



In October, we presented at South West London Dentistry Day, contributing insights from national datasets as well as patient views about the impact of costly dental experiences and low availability of NHS dentists. This presentation helped bring focussed insights about the needs and experiences of local people to decision-makers. We have been invited to participate in further discussions to increase equitable geographic distribution of NHS dentistry commissioning.

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

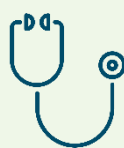
A year of making a difference

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 Sutton. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Patient Reference Group

Sutton Council spoke to the PRG about its upcoming Dementia Strategy. Members were able to feedback on it.



Patient Participation Groups

We attended PPGs at various surgeries to give general input. We also attended the Healthy You event in Wallington to promote Healthwatch.



Summer

Access to free earwax removal

87 people responded to our online survey on their ability to access free earwax removal. Access to free treatment was found to be confusing and inequitable.



Access to GP services

We published the results of our survey looking at 4285 people's experience of accessing their GP in Sutton.



Autumn

Outreach & Events

We represented Healthwatch at various community events including the St Helier Health & Wellbeing Day. We also attended the Healthwatch National Conference.



Safeguarding

We spoke to 56 individuals about their experience of social services' adult safeguarding process in Sutton.



Winter

Maternity

We have been speaking to individuals who have given birth at St Helier hospital within the last 12 months as part of our on-going Maternity Report.



Frailty

We interviewed 12 individuals living with frailty about their experience of community health services in Sutton.



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 Sutton 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.

We interviewed 12 residents about their experiences of living with frailty, their use of different community services and what helped them to manage their condition. Family members also shared their experiences of caring for these individuals. We've shared their feedback with the Frailty Board to give them another perspective on frailty.

Getting services to involve the public



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

We organised 6 Patient Reference Group Meetings. Volunteer residents from 17 GP surgeries in Sutton attended. Staff shared information about different health services and listened to volunteers' experiences of them. The group covered the Accessible Information Standard, Musculoskeletal services, End of Life Care, Surgery websites and Community Pharmacies.

Improving care over time



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

We interviewed Sutton residents about their experience of the Borough's safeguarding process. We asked what safeguarding meant to them, what was good about the process and how could it improve? We've shared the first set of feedback with Sutton Council and will repeat this at the end of each quarter in 2025. The project's purpose is to help the Council 'make safeguarding personal'.

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

Lottery of access to free earwax removal for Borough residents

Healthwatch Sutton received anecdotal feedback that accessing ear wax removal services in the Borough is not uniform or universal. People's ability to access free services is dependent on a variety of factors outside their control.

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) published a report 'Access Blocked' in 2023 that found that two-thirds of respondents were told that ear wax removal is no longer free on the NHS and a quarter of respondents could not afford a private service.

What did we do?

Healthwatch Sutton created a short online survey to capture a snapshot of experiences in the Borough. In total 87 responses were received in Spring 2024.

Key things we heard:



85%

of respondents who tried to remove the ear wax themselves using ear drops were unsuccessful.

41%

of those respondents who received treatment had to pay privately to have the earwax removed.

15%

of respondents didn't have treatment because they couldn't afford it

Comments made show the frustration that some respondents felt with difficulties around access and cost. Conversely, those that were able to access services free through the NHS were satisfied.

What difference did this make?

Our report highlighted to key decision makers that accessing free ear wax removal services in the Borough is unequal and varies between GP surgeries.

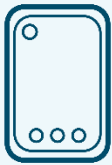
Listening to your experiences

Access to GP services in Sutton

Most residents who had an appointment thought it went well but some found it hard to contact their GP.

We created a survey for Sutton residents about their experience of their GP surgery: how they contacted, the outcome they had and how their appointment went. Sutton Primary Care Networks supported us by sharing the survey by email. It had 4285 responses. The survey showed some residents still need help to access their GP.

Key things we heard:



25%

of respondents told us they found it hard to contact their surgery, of whom half weren't able to contact at all

86%

of respondents who attended an appointment thought it went very well or quite well



"GP has been looking after me very well and I'm most grateful to everyone involved in my care."

"It causes so much stress trying to get an appointment that I don't bother with it."

We've been through the feedback and put together a set of commendations, recommendations and further suggestions for GP surgeries in Sutton. They highlight the range of experiences which people had and the need to meet their access needs as far as possible.

What difference did this make?

We shared our report with NHS South West London Integrated Care Board and presented it to a meeting of GP Practice Managers in Sutton. We also presented it to Sutton Council's Health & Wellbeing Board. We separately shared each surgery's own patients' responses with them. Finally, we presented the findings to an NHS Confederation Focus Group on the Future of Primary Care. We like to think this helped these organisations understand Sutton residents' experience and view of their GP since COVID-19. We recognise this remains an important issue and that surgeries are under pressure to respond with limited resources.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Sutton. 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:

- Holding 10 combined focus groups and interviews for patients and carers with communication needs, as part of our research on The Delivery of the Accessible Information Standard in South West London GP Practices.
- Interviewed unpaid carers of people who have experienced Sutton's safeguarding process and community services for frailty.
- Shared three reports with NHS South West London Integrated Care Board: GP services, Earwax removal and the Accessible Information Standard.



Improving adherence to the Accessible Information Standard in GP practices

We investigated how well South West London GP practices were meeting Deaf and disabled people's communication needs.

Patients and carers had low awareness of the Accessible Information Standard, which says that health and care services must meet people's communication needs in the ways that they request.

What difference did this make?

Through our engagement with GP practices, patients, and carers, we increased understanding of the Accessible Information Standard. We also worked with GP practices to understand barriers to implementation, and circulated resources to help them better meet people's needs.

Giving a voice to carers in Sutton

We spoke to carers of people who have experienced Sutton's safeguarding process and used community services for frailty.

Carers wanted a single source of information for finding out about available services. Some felt like they were on their own in this area, and the amount of services could be overwhelming. Carers also valued updates on progress and outcomes from services which the people they cared for were already using. They appreciated staffs' personable manner and wanted to help them.

What difference did this make?

We presented these experiences to Sutton Safeguarding Adults Board and the Frailty Board. We recommended signposting unpaid carers who services contact to relevant support. We also highlighted the risk of individuals with no support network falling through the cracks, as they often need their carers, primarily friends and family, to access health and social care services. We explained that carers may not be as familiar with different services' remit as professionals, and encouraged services to explain their role when they contacted them.

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 524 Sutton 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

We were contacted by a parent with concerns around her child, who was having difficulty at school and her behaviour.

As well as discussing Special Education Needs, Healthcare Plans and disability benefits, we were able to signpost the local chapter of the Autistic Society and the PDA society.

Pathological Demand Avoidance, is not as well as understood as other aspects of autism.

The client was grateful for the links to support groups.



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given more than 1000 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:

- Represented Healthwatch Sutton at 5 community events, including the St Helier Music & Community Festival and Wallington Health & Wellbeing Information & Advice Day.
- Interviewed people about their experience of the safeguarding process in Sutton. The focus was whether people found the process 'personal'.
- Interviewed people about their experience of NHS services in Sutton related to frailty. They also asked about the general impact of living with frailty.



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.

“As a volunteer with Healthwatch Sutton, I have had the privilege over the past few years to carry out various outreach activities, including care home visits and frailty interviews. I have also engaged with local residents on important safeguarding issues, helping to ensure their voices are heard and their wellbeing protected.”

Logie



Logie joined us to help give residents a voice about their use of health & social care services in Sutton.

This year, he has helped with two projects: speaking to people about their experiences of the safeguarding process in Sutton and to people with frailty about their use of different local NHS services.

He completed questionnaires with residents over the phone and visited them in their homes to carry out semi-structured interviews. These provided a lot of rich detail about their experience of services.

Volunteers like Logie make Healthwatch Sutton's work possible. We are very appreciative of their time and commitment and look forward to working with them in the year ahead.

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.healthwatchsutton.org.uk



020 8641 9540



info@healthwatchsutton.org.uk

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from LB Sutton	£97,318	Expenditure on pay	£215,212,
Additional income	£210,991	Non-pay expenditure	£59,643
		Office and management fee	£25,980
Total income	£308,309	Total Expenditure	£300,838

Additional income is broken down into:

- £151,418 received from SWL ICS for joint work between local Healthwatch, and supporting PPGs and the PRG in Sutton.
- £59,573 received for a variety of one-off engagement projects commissioned by the NHS and local authority.

ICS Funding

Healthwatch across South West London receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level.

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
South West London ICS funding to support collaborative South West London work, and the PPGs and PRG in Sutton	£151,418

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. Raising our profile among the local community by attending groups and events. We will offer to give a presentation about Healthwatch to them.
2. Organisational development by assessing and revising our Governance and business objectives for the next 3 to 5 years.
3. Developing our projects around Maternity, Domiciliary Care and Mental Wellbeing.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Sutton, Granfers Community Centre, 73–79 Oakhill Road, Sutton, SM1 3AA (Healthwatch Sutton Ltd)

Healthwatch Sutton 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 consists of 10 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met 6 times and made decisions on matters such as project delivery, policies and governance. 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 and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended 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 forward it to: the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England, NHS England, South West London ICB, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Sutton Council. This annual report will also be sent out via E-bulletin and our printed newsletter and promoted on social media.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

South West London Healthwatch organisations submitted a joint request for dentistry commissioning data on 11 December 2023 to the North East London ICB. Despite multiple follow-up requests from ourselves and the South West London ICB, we still had not received an adequate response as of October 2024. At this point, we independently identified another source for the data.

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, in our local authority area, we take information to the Sutton Health and Wellbeing Board, Sutton Place Partnership, Sutton Place Quality Collaborative, Sutton Alliance, Sutton Transformation and Delivery Group.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in South West London Integrated Care System. For example, we ensured that our reports were included in the new South West London Insights Bank, a library of patient engagement data. We also shared findings from our patient engagement and ensured the System was meaningfully engaging with people through our presentation on 13 Integrated Care Board committees.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Sutton is represented on the Sutton Health and Wellbeing Board by Pete Flavell, Chief Executive Officer, Sutton Healthwatch.

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by presenting our GP report to the Board.

Alyssa Chase-Vilchez represents Healthwatch Sutton on the South West London Integrated Care Partnership, Board, and their sub-committees.

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
South West London Accessible Information Standard project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heard from 84 GP practice staff and 144 patients and carers - Created a new community of practice comprised of patients, carers, ICB representatives, and GP staff to carry forward recommendations from engagement - Presented recommendations for change widely at GP practices and ICB meetings - Received letter from the ICB pledging to work with Healthwatch to make progress towards recommendations - South West London Healthwatch has launched a follow up study focussed on BSL interpretation - Through our work on the Accessible Information Standard project, especially through continued engagement with our newly established voluntary sector steering group, we have learned how to make our communications as accessible as possible. By employing these accessibility adaptations in our work (e.g., in our presentation at the December 2024 Patient and Community Engagement Group and during our Accessible Information Standard community of practice meetings), we further shared these best practices with colleagues across the ICS. This knowledge-sharing can help the ICS better communicate and meet the needs of people living with disability, helping to address health inequalities.

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
South West London Community Service project	<p>– This is an ongoing piece of work, and we are working closely with the South West London ICS to ensure insights inform local adaptation of NHSE 10 year plan once published, specifically its focus on moving services from hospital to community.</p>
Dentistry advocacy	<p>Local Healthwatch collaborated to bring a presentation to the South West London Dentistry Day, contributing insights from national datasets as well as patient views about the impact of costly dental experiences and low availability of NHS dentists. This presentation helped bring focussed insights about the needs and experiences of local people to encourage and gain commitments to improvements.</p> <p>Healthwatch Richmond also gave evidence to the London Assembly, drawing in part from the South West London Healthwatch collaborative's conversations with South West London ICB and requests for information from North East London ICB commissioners. The evidence was shared in a report, which presents a set of recommendations that add further weight to our South West London advocacy around improving equitable access for our patients.</p>

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