

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Sutton
Annual Report
2021-22



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Message from our chair

Healthwatch Sutton is pleased to publish this report for the 2021/22 year. We started 2022 on a high with confirmation that our consortium bid for the Healthwatch contract had been successful. We now have five years of contractual stability ahead of us.

It's been another extraordinary period moving from pandemic to post-pandemic and to recovery. At a local level, Healthwatch Sutton continues with resilience and commitment and the drive to improve health and social care never ceases.

The NHS is a remarkable organisation, working to bounce back while tackling more issues than ever. Staff shortages, recruitment problems, staff burn out, long waiting lists, inequality in care and questioning about the best design for primary care are but a few. The next chapter is an important time for our community, our services and for Healthwatch's role to help shape the future. By collaborating, working collectively and finding innovative solutions we will move forward and adapt to new structures, moving away from Clinical Commissioning Groups towards Integrated Care Services.

Healthwatch Sutton has a committed group of staff. Although we're small, only four staff, we punch above our weight. We have a committed group of volunteers who along with the staff seek the views of our local population using this to develop an evidence base. This information is shared with local NHS and social care staff. The end result is to influence and drive for improvements in local statutory services.



This past year we undertook reviews in dental services, long Covid provision, the quality of care provided during Covid, nursing home provision, the quality of General Practice and helped organize a Health Summit to identify what impacts on our health locally.

Thank you to you for taking the time to read this, and thank you to our invaluable staff and volunteers who we rely on for the continuance of Healthwatch Sutton.

Barbara McIntosh, Chair
Healthwatch Sutton



"The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities."

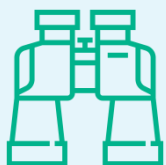
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Sutton is your local health and social care champion. From Worcester Park to Wallington and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other 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

- 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.

Who we are

Our Board works to ensure that we are fulfilling our legal and statutory obligations.

Our Directors are:

- Barbara McIntosh – Chair
- Adrian Attard – Treasurer
- Adrian Bonner
- David Elliman
- Launa Watson
- Noor Sumun
- Janet Wingrove
- David Williams (*Chair to August 2021*)
- Shri Mehrotra (*to December 2021*)

We employ a staff team who work to make sure that those running services in Sutton put people at the heart of health and social care.

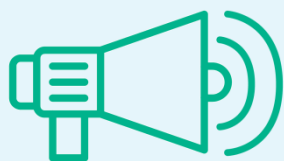
Our staff members are:

- Pete Flavell – Chief Executive Officer
- Gemma Abraham (was Thatcher) – Communications, Engagement and Projects Officer
- Lorraine Davis – Team Administrator
- Andrew McDonald – Health Engagement and Projects Officer (*to March 2022*)

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people

Reaching out



740 people

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

1,667 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and Covid-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

3 reports

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

Our most popular report was:

dentistry since Covid-19

which highlighted the struggles people have on accessing dentistry services since the pandemic began.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

19

outstanding volunteers, who gave up 26 days to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£109,960

which is the same as the previous year.









We also currently employ

4 staff

who help us carry out this work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring	 <p>To support the COVID-19 vaccination programme we talked to different communities to understand their hesitancy towards the vaccine and published guidance to improve trust.</p>	 <p>We supported the local NHS to speak to over 3000 patients about their experiences of accessing appointments and consultations with their GP practices.</p>
Summer	 <p>In response to the large number of enquiries from residents struggling to access NHS dental care, we called all the dental practices in the borough to help people find a local dentist.</p>	 <p>We helped to organise the Population Health Summit which allowed the NHS, Council and Voluntary Sector to identify the factors that impact on people's health in Sutton.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We talked to residents about their experiences of Long Covid in order to help improve the support and services available to them.</p>	 <p>We talked to care home staff, residents and their family and friends to find out about their experience in care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>
Winter	 <p>We talked to residents about their experiences, good or bad, of accessing dental services since the Covid-19 pandemic began.</p>	 <p>We resumed our Enter & View activities to evaluate the quality of care delivered in local care homes by speaking to staff, residents and their family and friends.</p>

Listening to your experiences

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



Experiences in care homes during the pandemic

During the pandemic, care homes were on the frontline in the fight to protect people from catching the virus.

We carried out four surveys to find out about the experiences of care home residents, their friends and family and staff members between 9 March and 25 May 2021.

This work was commissioned by Sutton Council.



248 people told us their story

74 care home residents, 59 of their friends and family and 115 staff members.

Care home residents told us:

- 98% were able to access care if they needed to.
- 92% were given the opportunity to speak to friends/family via phone or video call.

Residents with learning disabilities told us:

- All residents felt safe in their home.
- Around 50% had not been able to see their friends and family.

Family and friends told us:

- 97% felt that their family member/friend had been safe.
- 93% were supplied with PPE.
- Comments showed the pandemic had a considerable impact on visits.

Staff were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with 10 statements:

The statements with the **greatest agreement** were: *I have been able to access COVID-19 tests when I have needed to; I know where to get support for myself and when I needed PPE, I was able to access it easily and on time.*

The statements with the **least agreement** were: *I feel that the available mental health and wellbeing services are supporting my needs effectively; I have felt safe at work and if I have raised concerns, these have been addressed by my employer.*

Next steps

Recommendations will be developed with our partners, including Sutton Council, local NHS, care home managers and staff, care home residents and their friends and family and the voluntary and community sector.



“Stopping all visits from family and friends for such a long time would have had a traumatic effect on many residents, especially if they did not understand the concept of covid. They would have thought that all their family and friends had deserted them.”

Family member of care home resident



Accessing dental services during COVID-19

We saw a large increase in the amount of enquiries from residents struggling to access local NHS dental services.

In response to this, we spoke to 30 dental practices in and around the borough to find out if they were taking on new patients, and the average waiting times for routine and emergency appointments.

This work was carried out between 16 June and 19 July 2021.

What we found:

- 12 dental practices were taking on new NHS patients.
- 12 dental practices were taking on NHS patients for emergencies.
- 23 dental practices were taking on children as NHS patients. However, at 7 of these practices, children could only be registered if their parents and/or siblings were already registered at the practice.
- The waiting time for urgent care varied widely from 2 hours to 2 months.
- The waiting time for routine care varied widely from 1 week to 6 months.

We used our findings to inform our signposting work and help people access the dental care they need.

We also shared our findings with our information and advice service provided by Citizens Advice Sutton (via Advice Link Partnership Sutton) to inform their signposting work.



It was difficult to find a dentist taking new NHS patients during the pandemic. I found one eventually through Healthwatch Sutton.

Local resident



**Looking forward: Experiences of accessing dentistry since COVID-19**

In January 2022, we launched our survey to find out more about local people’s experiences, good or bad, of accessing dental services since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

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 the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture, through hearing personal experiences, and the impact on people's lives. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone, can challenge assumptions and motivate people to think and work more creatively.

As part of our campaign "Your Care, Your Way", we used a case study video from Connor who experienced difficulties registering with his local GP practice to highlight the difficulties many people face when using assistive technology. This video helps to convey the struggles people face on a daily basis, which will help decision makers take a step back and see the bigger picture.



Getting services to involve the public

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

We gave advice to a local GP practice to set up Patient Participation Groups which enabled them to collect the views of local people directly and improve services directly as a result.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

We have known about dental problems for a long time. In 2016 we published our report highlighting that some people were struggling to access dental care. Over the years we have continued to hear from the public about access problems. Last year we called for reform of NHS dentistry, co-signing a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for NHS dentistry to be accessible and affordable for everyone.

Making a difference together

Through our commissioned work, we are able to ensure the views of local people are heard and influence decision-making when improving services and patient experiences.

We support Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) at local GP surgeries and the Patient Reference Group (PRG) to communicate with local commissioners. This work is funded by NHS Sutton.

We also provide independent feedback and reporting systems for local health and social care services.



Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)

This year, we have supported PPGs with their recruitment. We have started the process of recruiting students with the hope that they will gain a powerful insight into how local NHS services operate, as well as share their views, experiences and ideas on how to improve patient experience. So far, 5 students have attended PPG meetings.

In addition to this, we also held meetings between patient volunteers and staff from each of the 4 NHS Primary Care Networks (PCNs). The purpose was to decide how PPG volunteers could support their PCN to deliver its priorities, as well as provide staff with an insight into how much patients know about their PCN.

Patient Reference Group (PRG)

We supported the PRG and facilitated discussions on health topics including the development of the new Integrated Care System in South West London, the Covid and flu vaccination programmes in Sutton and the challenge of digital exclusion.

Population Health Summit

In September 2021, we helped to organise the Sutton Population Health Summit. It was a large face-to-face event that brought together staff from across the local NHS, Council and Voluntary sector. The aim of the Summit was to identify some of the social and economic factors that impact on people's health and wellbeing in Sutton.



Improving diabetes care in Sutton

We supported Sutton Council to design a new model of care for people with diabetes in Carshalton. We interviewed 14 people to understand the difficulties they had in managing their diabetes, focusing on the economic hurdles as well as their experiences of local diabetes services. They are planning on using the new model of care next year.



Patient experience survey

We worked with South West London Health & Care Partnership and South West London Clinical Commissioning Group to find out about patients' experiences of accessing appointments and consultations with their GP practices since March 2020.

We helped create a survey which was distributed to patients through their GP surgeries as well as through local charities.



3004 people took part

The survey was carried out between September and December 2020.

What we found

- 89% of patients had contacted their GP surgery since the lockdown period. Those that wanted to contact their GP but did not do so did not want to disturb the surgery, were following Covid-19 rules or thought that their surgery was closed.
- Patients had largely contacted their GP surgery via telephone (71%).
- 76.5% found it easy to contact their GP surgery. For those patients that didn't find it easy to contact their GP surgery, the main reasons included long waiting times on the phone, phone not answered in the practice and long introductory message.
- Most patients responded that they were not given a choice of appointment, although 61% were happy with their appointment type. Those who were unhappy with the appointment type offered indicated that they wanted a face-to-face appointment, as they thought a phone appointment was not effective.
- 70% felt that overall safe and effective care had been received. Of those who answered 'No', the primary concern was around difficulty in getting an appointment. Additionally, some would rather have had a face-to-face consultation and/or believed that a phone consultation would not have met their needs.

Our recommendations

1. Maintain traditional alongside remote modes – personalised offer and choice on appointment modes.
2. Publish an explanation of the booking system.
3. Publish an explanation of the triage system.
4. Explain how the practice plans to operate as the pandemic evolves.
5. Clear, visible and regular communication from practices.

What difference did this make

We have held meetings with practices and their patient participation groups to identify areas of good practice, areas of improvement and to create an action plan on how to continue to improve the service offered. Practices have until March 2022 to implement action plans.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Sutton 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. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

The Healthwatch Sutton Information and Advice service is based at *Citizens Advice Sutton* and operates as part of the Advice Link Partnership Sutton (ALPS).

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on Covid-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Helping people to access the services they need



Providing people with the information they need

We spoke to a local resident who had a crown fitted previously. It had become loose and was refitted during an emergency appointment. When she went back to the dentist, she was told that the crown had become loose again and her tooth had broken.

She felt that she had been treated dismissively by the dentists, who had not explained the treatments available to her on the NHS.

We talked her through the criteria for different bridges and implants so she was well informed when she went back to her dentist. We also talked about raising a complaint as she was unhappy with the way the dentist had spoken to her.



Signposting people who needed additional support

We spoke to a local resident regarding an issue with benefits for her child with disabilities.

She mentioned that she is finding it hard to connect with people who understand what she is going through.

We talked about local support available for her through Sutton Parents Forum and also gave her details of the local branch of the Autistic Society for her to be able to meet others in similar situations.



Working with the Healthwatch Sutton team, Citizens Advice Sutton has been able to provide clients with information and advice on a number of health and community care issues, ranging from care assessments, bereavement counselling, as well as finding GPs and dentists. We have advised on rights, complaints and access to services. We thank Healthwatch Sutton for all the support and hard work over the last year.

Ifat Khawaja, Services Manager, Citizens Advice Sutton



Volunteers

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

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say by carrying our surveys at events in the community and sending surveys to our members in the post.
- Visited care homes with Sutton Council to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Informed our signposting work by calling all the dental practices in and around the Borough.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.





Shiraz

“My experience of volunteering has been fabulous. It allows me to positively contribute towards creating a healthy community for all in Sutton. I have been so impressed by the work that is carried out by Healthwatch Sutton in getting people’s voices heard, that I am in the process of applying to become a trustee so I can become more involved.”



Janet

“I have found being a volunteer and trustee a brilliant opportunity to do something useful whilst having fun as part of a friendly and welcoming team. The variety of different projects and tasks means that it is always interesting and I have learnt so much.”



Shri

“I have enjoyed being involved with Healthwatch Sutton, as both a trustee and volunteer. I particularly enjoy representing Healthwatch Sutton at different meetings and making sure people’s voices are heard in the development of local services.”



Do you feel inspired?

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

 www.healthwatchsutton.org.uk

 **020 8641 9540**

 info@healthwatchsutton.org.uk

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. We also receive additional income from NHS Sutton and a variety of NHS organisations.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£89,960	Staff costs	£126,374
Funding received from NHS Sutton	£40,968	Operational costs	£15,966
Additional income	£16,504	Support and administration	£9,203
Total income	£147,432	Total expenditure	£151,543

*These figures are subject to audit.
**Healthwatch Sutton is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. We comply with both company accounting and charity commission SORP requirements.

Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Maximising the potential of our new consortium contract (Making Informed Choices – starting on 1 July 2022). In particular, we hope to improve our intelligence gathering and to work more closely with consortium partner organisations.
2. Developing new post-Covid priorities by identifying the latest issues having the greatest impact on local people.
3. Improving local awareness of Healthwatch Sutton and engagement with our communities by carrying out more outreach activities.

Next steps

During this reporting period our staff, Board and volunteers have carried out an organisational self-assessment using the Quality Framework created by Healthwatch England. This coming year, we will work through the areas of improvement that we have identified to make improvements to our organisation. These improvements will help to deliver the priorities we have outlined above.

Thank you

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

- Members of the public who shared their views and experiences with us.
- All of our amazing staff, directors and volunteers, including:

Aboo Koheevallee	Adrian Attard	Adrian Bonner
Barbara McIntosh	Chelliah Lohendran	Clare Nunns
David Elliman	Isabelle Harding	Janet Wingrove
Launa Watson	Neena Mehrotra	Rosemary Bloxham
Sally Sauvageot	Sheila Gooljar	Shri Mehrotra
Shiraz Sethna	Stephanie Phillips	Susan Hind
Noor Sumun		
- PPG and PRG patient representatives and GP practice staff.
- All the organisations and groups who have contributed to our work, including:
 - NHS Sutton
 - South West London Clinical Commissioning Group
 - London Borough of Sutton
 - Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust
 - South West London St George's Mental Health Trust
 - Community Action Sutton
 - Citizens Advice Sutton
 - Sutton Carers Centre
 - Age UK Sutton
 - Sutton Mental Health Foundation
 - Sutton Care Homes (staff, residents and their families)
 - other South West London Healthwatch organisations (any beyond!)
 - Local Dentistry Committee
 - Covid Rehab Service

Statutory Statements

About us

Healthwatch Sutton, Granfers Community Centre, 73-79 Oakhill Road, Sutton SM1 3AA

Healthwatch Sutton Information & Advice, Citizens Advice Sutton, 68 Parkgate Road, Wallington SM6 0AH

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

Charity number: 1151601 **Company number:** 08171224



The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch board consists of 7 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. Through 2021/22 the board met 6 times and made decisions on matters such as agreeing to carry out a variety of Covid-19 related projects and signed off updated policies and strategies.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by looking at our feedback data – however, direct public engagement has been particularly difficult during the pandemic. The Covid-19 virus dominated everyone's priorities in relation to health at a national and local level and as such we carried out a series of engagement projects relating to different aspect of the pandemic to support decision-makers locally. As the pandemic subsides we are looking to reprioritise our investigations.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

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 health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, by engaging with care home residents and their families about their experience during the pandemic and with less affluent communities through our diabetes work.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and we will also share it with Healthwatch England, Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS England, NHS Sutton and the London Borough of Sutton.

Responses to recommendations and requests

None of the providers who received recommendations from us failed to respond to our recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Sutton is represented on the Sutton Health and Wellbeing Board by Barbara McIntosh, our Chair. During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending the planning meetings with the Health and Wellbeing Board Chair and influencing the agenda for each meeting. Our Chair has ensured that the views and experiences of local residents are sought before decisions relating to health and social care are made. .

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Primary school mental wellbeing survey/ report	Following publication of the report we worked with teachers and other related professionals and agreed one recommendation, to repeat the survey post-Covid-19 to see how the pandemic has impacted the mental wellbeing of this cohort of pupils. This will start in late 2022.
Test & Trace survey/report	The report acknowledged that, as a national initiative, local change in response to the report would be challenging. However, the report was shared with other Healthwatch intelligence at a meeting with the Test & Trace leads at NHS England and as such national understanding of the issues was shared and could be acted on.
Accessing dentistry service since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic	This project has been carried out in consultation from the outset with our Local Dentistry Committee leaders and actions will be developed with them and other key stakeholders.
Improving diabetes care in Sutton	The themes that we pulled from our in-depth online interviews with people who are diabetic or pre-diabetic led to the development and recruitment of a Wellbeing Coach to provide support and improve the health of Carshalton residents.



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