



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Sutton annual report 2025/26

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Chief Executive Officer
Pete Flavell

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“The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our chair

At the heart of Healthwatch Sutton's work are the experiences of local people.

This report reflects what we have heard over the past year and how those voices have helped shape discussions about health and social care in Sutton.

A particular focus of our work this year has been listening to people whose experiences are not always heard or understood. Through projects exploring frailty, safeguarding, maternity care and community mental health services, we have gathered valuable insights from residents whose perspectives may otherwise be overlooked and shared these findings with the services involved.

We also carried out a survey on access to earwax removal, which revealed confusion about how to access NHS services.

We have also been collaborating with other Healthwatch organisations across South West London to improve the quality of British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation services provided by GP practices.

Alongside our other projects, this demonstrates the importance of listening to people's everyday experiences of care, whether they concern access to services, the quality of support received, or the challenges of navigating the system.



Chair
Janet Wingrove



Thank you to everyone who contributed, including participants, staff, volunteers, Board members, and partners. Together, by valuing people's voices, we drive meaningful improvements. We hope this report highlights our impact and proves both informative and engaging.

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.

Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported more than 500 people to have their say and get information about health and social care. We employed 7 staff and our work was supported by 8 volunteers.



Reaching out:

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

512 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as accessing social services, social care, GPs and Dentists.



Championing your voice:

We published 5 reports about the improvements people would like to see in these areas: Maternity, Earwax, Frailty, Safeguarding and Community Mental Health.

Our most popular report was Ear Wax removal, highlighting people's struggles in accessing this service through the NHS.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by the Sutton Council. In 2025/26 we received £102,193.76, which is 5% more than last year.

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

We collected feedback on St Helier Hospital's maternity services through 11 interviews and a focus group with 23 participants.



We ran a follow-up workshop on Children & Young People's Mental Health, building on a survey with over 1,000 responses.



Summer

We conducted 12 semi-structured interviews on residents' experiences of frailty services and shared findings with Sutton's Frailty Board.



We arranged for St Helier's Head of Nursing to meet a secondary breast cancer support group to discuss A&E concerns.



Autumn

We conducted a Community Mental Health services survey, receiving 113 responses. We shared the findings with South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust.



We visited Citizens Advice Sutton and Advocacy for All, to learn more about how they support residents to access health and social care services.



Winter

We interviewed residents about their experience of the borough's adult safeguarding process and made recommendations to Sutton's Adult Social Care Team.



We arranged for the Sutton Home from Hospital Service & the St Helier Audiology Team to visit Sutton's Tuesday and Thursday Clubs.



Working together for change

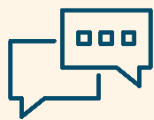
We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Sutton are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services in South West London .

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



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

We are part of the six-member South West London Healthwatch Collaborative. The Collaborative has collated residents' feedback from across South West London, including on community and adult mental health services. The Collaborative's Executive Officer has worked with the ICS to connect its activities with these insights, receiving positive feedback. On their Virtual Wards transformation work, they said "we have heard what's most important through local engagement, including by our Healthwatch partners."



A big conversation:

The Collaborative engaged with the d/Deaf and deafblind community, their carers and GP Practice staff, to evaluate a new BSL interpretation provider used by Practices in South West London. We published two reports to highlight our recommendations, one for Practices and another for our ICS. We are now meeting with stakeholders to press for improvements to BSL interpretation services in South West London.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

The Collaborative have met monthly with our ICS, to discuss engagement priorities and where their work aligns. The Executive Officer has also attended a variety of stakeholder groups to champion its activities and identify further engagement opportunities. All Local Healthwatch in South West London are preparing to adapt as Local Healthwatch and ICS structures evolve.

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

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

We gathered feedback on people's experiences of St Helier Hospital's Maternity services

We shared their feedback with the Hospital's Senior Leadership. The Chief Operating Officer responded, detailing several steps already underway to improve their maternity services. Their improvement workstreams included strengthening Personalised Care, delivering Global Majority Service User Support & Engagement and creating a Patient Survey Action Plan.



Getting services to involve the public

We delivered six meetings between local health services and patient representatives

These six 'Patient Reference Group' meetings enabled professionals from a variety of health & social care services to discuss their work with residents. Speakers represented services including Dentistry, Community Pharmacy, Audiology and Concessionary Travel. Residents shared their lived experience of using these services, asked professionals questions and took information back to their Patient Participation Groups.



Improving care over time

We are contributing to improving the safeguarding process in Sutton

We spoke to 189 residents and their families and carers about Sutton's safeguarding process. We heard from people with different needs and made a series of recommendations to improve the process in Sutton. We shared these with Sutton Safeguarding Adults Board and Sutton Adult Social Care, who accepted a majority. We will carry out follow-up engagement later this year to review the impact of changes.

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.

We've highlighted two examples of our engagement projects:

- **Ear Wax Removal** – survey
- **Living with Frailty** – interviews



Investigating people's access to ear wax removal services in Sutton

Last year, we investigated people's efforts to address hearing loss due to ear wax.

We had received anecdotal feedback suggesting that access to ear wax removal services in the borough was inconsistent and not universally available. South West London (including Sutton) is one of only 7 out of 42 NHS regions in England without a universal ear wax removal service.

What did we do

We shared a short online survey with 1700 residents to capture a snapshot of their experiences of ear wax removal in the Borough. This received 87 responses and we produced a follow-up engagement report. We published this on our website, together with a response from the NHS.

Key things we heard:



85%

Over 85% of those who tried to remove the wax themselves using ear drops were unsuccessful.

44%

Of those who received treatment had it at their GP. 41% paid privately and 14% had it at hospital

15%

Didn't have treatment because they could not afford it.

The feedback highlighted the importance of clarifying to residents how to access services locally, including for those who could not afford to pay privately.

What difference did this make?

We asked our local NHS leaders for a list of the GP Practices in Sutton which offered ear wax removal services. We also contacted the Practices ourselves, to cross-check this information, and published a list on our website. This helped residents to know if their GP offered the service.

Listening to people's experiences of living with frailty in Sutton

Sutton has undertaken significant work to develop its community services for people living with frailty.

To support this, we interviewed 12 residents living with frailty to understand their health and use of NHS services. Their feedback highlighted the range of services they use and how they adapt to access care.

Key things we heard:

- "You retire and it's like you're non-existent you're just there just that number and you have to stand up and say well I'm not just a number I'm a person and I need to access services like everybody else."
Maximising Independence User
- "You've got to be quite positive about yourself and your health. You've got to try and, you know, do things for yourself and have that input."
Maximising Independence User
- "That's the bit I miss, going to the toilet on my own... It's embarrassing."
Urgent Community Response User
- "To be truthful, my daughter, makes it possible for me to live on my own."
Frailty Hub User

We presented our recommendations to improve community services for frailty to Sutton's Frailty Board, as well as three of Sutton's Integrated Neighbourhood Teams. We also published our full report online and shared it with our wider network, to maximise our findings' impact and ensure people's experiences were heard.

What difference did this make?

We shared insights on living with frailty with community service providers in Sutton, helping to inform their decision-making about those services. We also connected a resident with St Helier Hospital and Sutton Council, to address concerns about their parents' care. Their issues were reviewed and a clear point of contact was provided for ongoing support.

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:

- Interviewing residents about their experience of the Borough's safeguarding process.
- Gathering feedback from people about their use of community mental health services.
- Attending a variety of community events in the Borough to promote Healthwatch Sutton.



Highlighting people's experiences of the Borough's safeguarding process

We interviewed people about the Sutton safeguarding process

People gave us feedback about being at the centre of a safeguarding concern. Their feedback reflected the experiences of residents with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. They spoke about talking to too many services at once, their understanding of the word safeguarding, and how they tried to achieve the right outcomes for themselves and their dependents.

What difference did this make?

We produced four reports summarising findings from 189 interviews, which were shared with Sutton Council Adult Social Care. They plan to implement most of our recommendations, including clearer communication about who is contacting residents, empowering individuals during the safeguarding process, and ensuring social workers engage with residents directly where possible.

Speaking to people about using community mental health services

We gathered feedback on community mental health services to monitor the impact of a Transformation Programme

We shared a questionnaire with residents who had recently used these services, receiving 113 responses. This built on two earlier surveys conducted before and during the Programme, to track changes in people's experiences over time. We asked about their care, waiting times, and how well friends and carers were involved.

What difference did this make?

We shared our report with the Clinical Manager, who outlined ongoing improvements aligned with people's feedback. These included checking in with those on waiting lists, avoiding 'No Caller ID' calls, collecting demographic data of service users, and providing additional support for autistic people. We hope our engagement helped the Mental Health Trust in delivering these services.

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year 512 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

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



Support with a GP complaint process

Anna (*name changed*) and her son were dismissed by their GP, who did not view the child's infections as a serious concern

Anna's five-year-old son had five infections.

Despite repeated visits, the GP did not consider these to be a serious issue and ignored Anna's concerns.

Eventually, she took her son to A&E, where he received the treatment he needed.

Following this experience, Anna wanted support to raise a complaint about the care her son had received.

We signposted her to Advocacy for All's NHS complaints service, where she could access guidance and support through the complaints process.



I thought I was the only one dealing with this so it will be nice to speak to someone else going through this. (From a different Information & Signposting client)



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given over 600 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:

- Interviewed residents in their homes about their experiences of frailty
- Carried out phone interviews with residents about the Sutton safeguarding process
- Attended local community events to promote Healthwatch Sutton's work



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.



**Healthwatch Sutton
Volunteers**

Our volunteers have represented Healthwatch Sutton at a variety of community events. This includes World Parkinson's Day and the Health & Wellbeing Information & Advice Days.

Healthwatch Sutton's volunteers listen to residents' anecdotal feedback, which provides useful insight for planning its future engagement work.

It's also a great chance for them to learn about all the community organisations in the borough and how Healthwatch Sutton can work with them.

"I enjoy meeting people in the community, and use my expertise, knowledge and healthcare skills to help them find the right pathway towards achieving their goals, in regards to their health and wellbeing."

Sheila has volunteered with us for many years, delivering outreach events, Enter & View visits and interviewing residents. She uses her NHS background to listen to and understand their experiences.

"Above all I would like to put something back into the community."





Sheila and Noor

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 the London Borough of Sutton under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from London Borough of Sutton	£102,193.76	Expenditure on pay	£196,847.04
NHS ICB Hosting	£99,916.66	Non-pay expenditure	£70,055.64
Additional income – NHS PRG	£41,868.00	Office and management fee	£25,980.00
Additional income-generated	£35,626.94		
Total income	£270,605.36	Total Expenditure	£292,882.68

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across South West London also receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
NHS ICB Hosting (SWL Healthwatch Collaborative)	£99,916.66

Finance and future priorities

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. Providing intelligence to support the developments of Neighbourhoods as outlined in the NHS 10 Year Plan
2. Investigating the experiences of people receiving packages of care from Sutton Council
3. Finding out people's views following their visit to the Emergency Department at St Helier Hospital

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Sutton, Granfers Community Centre, 73–79 Oakhill Road, Sutton, SMI 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 11 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 2025/26, the Board met 12 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 2025/26, 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

We had 0 providers who did not 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 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 Borough's Four Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and our Safeguarding Adults Board

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in South West London Integrated Care System. For example, we present findings from our South West London-wide engagement to forums including the Health Equity Partnership Group, the SWL Health Research Collaborative and South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust

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

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Sutton is represented on the Sutton Health and Wellbeing Board by Pete Flavell, Healthwatch Sutton CEO.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by sharing reports and data collected by Healthwatch Sutton with the Board and scrutinising whether user experience has influenced the Board's decision-making.

Alyssa Chase-Vilchez and latterly Andrew McDonald has represented the 6 Local Healthwatch in South West London to South West London Integrated Care Partnership, Board and their sub-committees.

Statutory statements

Enter and view


We did not use our statutory Enter and View powers in 2025–2026.

2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
British Sign Language Interpretation Services in South West London GP Practices (SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer)	We have made a series of recommendations to GP Practices and our ICS about improving BSL interpretation services for d/Deaf and deafblind individuals.
Accessible Information Standard Implementation (SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer)	We provided health and social care providers with a list of resources as part of Disability Pride Month in July. We also communicated with disabled people and health and care providers about their rights outlined in the Accessible Information Standard, which was updated in June 2025.
Adult Community Mental Health Transformation Project (SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer)	We presented our insights from adult community mental health service users to South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust. We continue to meet with the Trust biannually to share findings from our other projects.
South West London Community Services Project (SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer)	We have collated findings about NHS and Local Authority community services from all six Local Healthwatch in South West London. We published a final report to inform delivery of these services.
Dentistry Advocacy (SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer)	Following earlier engagement, we met with our ICS to discuss improvements to dentistry provision in South West London. This is an ongoing piece of work which we hope to remain involved in next year.

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