



On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Southwark Annual Report 2020-21

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Message from our Chair

In March, Healthwatch Southwark recruited a new Advisory Board made up of a diverse pool of local people. The board members are enthusiastic, with a strong desire to come together to support the Healthwatch Southwark team to achieve their aim and priorities. With that said, this year has seen a tremendous change in how Healthwatch Southwark has listened and supported accessibility throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. Few of us could have imagined the magnitude the pandemic would play in our lives, so as a Board, we feel fortunate that the Healthwatch Southwark team have worked tirelessly to ensure the local community's voice remains heard and seen by health and social care organisations and the local council. For instance, Healthwatch Southwark have captured the experiences of the public on the Covid-19 pandemic by way of their 'Covid survey', which highlighted the impact the pandemic has had on local residents' mental wellbeing and also, how clear communication from organisations can be used to improve service user experience.

It is noticeable that Healthwatch Southwark are eager to further develop new ways of working that support the 'new normal', transparency and accessibility, engaging the community in person where possible whilst continuing to develop their online presence. This is evident by their improved website's signposting and feedback features, which has seen a huge increase in visitors to their website.

There has been a great effort by the Healthwatch Southwark team to engage and support local people from various backgrounds to access services and to share their experiences. In this time, the team have helped people with visual impairments share their experience of 'waiting for hospital treatment'; the team have also worked in conjunction with the Alzheimer's Society and organised on-going signposting and feedback sessions for carers.

The positive relationships that the team have formed have been a great catalyst to current improvements and have supported the growth of strong healthy relationships with local people from all walks of life, as well as local organisations. For instance, work in the 'Carers Project' has encouraged an inclusive co-design approach with the local council to support improvements.

A strength of the local community can be seen in the 'Community Health Ambassadors Network'. This has been a wonderful success, with over 85 volunteers helping to support and inform their local community in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Ambassadors act as a representative of their community, providing feedback on barriers faced by people when trying to stay safe. Through this connection Healthwatch Southwark can help to ensure the right support and information is shared and accessible to all.

I would like to thank all, past and present, who have contributed their time and effort to support Healthwatch Southwark to achieve these amazing milestones this year, and I hope more local people will come and join us as we continue in our efforts to champion the views of people who use local health and social care services.

Sheona St Hilaire

Healthwatch Southwark Advisory Board Chair

About us

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Southwark. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

Our goals



1 Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



2 Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares can experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



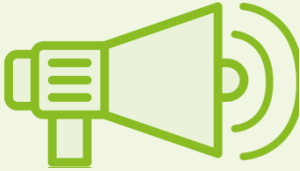
“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the Covid-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. Covid-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

Reaching out



We heard from

229 people

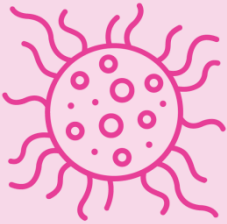
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

171 people

this year.

Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

4721

people during the Covid-19 pandemic this year.

Making a difference to care



We published

4 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. From this, we made 28 recommendations for improvement.

75% of recommendations

we made last year have been acted upon, at the point where we reviewed progress.

Health and care that works for you



92 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed to 17 days of volunteering support.

We employ 4 staff

100% of whom are full time equivalent, 3 of the staff members are part of the core Healthwatch contract and an additional staff member (6 months post) was recruited from additional Covid-19 funding from the Local Authority.

We received

£120,000 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21, this is the same amount as last year.



Theme one: Then and now

Waiting for treatment



Then: delayed hospital treatments and appointments

The most common issue we heard feedback about in 2019/20 was delayed or cancelled hospital treatments and appointments. This issue almost doubled from March as the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

We shared this information with our local NHS Trusts, King's College Hospital (KCH) and Guy's & St Thomas' (GSTT), in our quarterly stakeholder feedback report. We also highlighted the importance of communicating better with patients, as we heard from patients that lack of communication was making them feel anxious.

The issue of 'waiting times' was put on the agenda for the Trusts joint patient and public voice programme, which guided patient engagement throughout Covid recovery. We were also given a seat on the steering group for the programme.

From the perspective of Healthwatch, we felt there needed to be more focus on gathering the experiences of people waiting for appointments. Even though waiting times were difficult to change mainly due to hospitals prioritising staff energy dealing with the Covid crisis, we felt certain that systematic changes could be implemented to improve the actual experiences of people waiting for their hospital appointment.



Now: Experiences of waiting for hospital treatment

In 2020/21, we carried out a qualitative research project to explore 11 people's experiences of waiting for hospital treatment in-depth. We decided to target patients who might be seldom heard – those with a visual impairment or another disability.

We found that their experiences of waiting had common themes or stages, that related to their interactions with the hospital. These were:

- **Uncertainty:** Related to lack of communication and a sense of 'not knowing'. This had a detrimental effect on people's mental health by increasing their anxiety.
- **Fighting:** Feeling like they alone had to constantly push for things to happen. This left people feeling isolated and helpless.
- **Crisis:** Uncertainty and exhaustion while waiting contributed to a decline in mental health, physical health, or relationships.
- **Resignation:** People accepted what was happening and felt they couldn't change it or weren't in control, which could have further impact on their physical health, mental wellbeing, and trust in the hospital.

We also found that the Covid-19 pandemic had not really changed these issues, only exacerbated them - especially uncertainty.

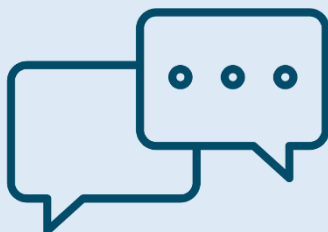


"The fact that people are nice to me and patient and understanding and they treat me seriously, and I get these explanations to understand. Those are all vitally important things to do." - Project Participant

We made several recommendations on how to improve patients experiences of waiting, such as providing packages of information more regularly during the waiting journey, 'flagging' waiting patients with incomplete notes or actions and providing mental health signposting on referral.

The recommendations were shared with GSTT and KCH at the end of 2020/21, there are plans to discuss the recommendations in our forthcoming liaison meetings and to present our report to wider stakeholders such as the CCG. From initial discussions with the Trusts, it seems our recommendations are being considered seriously, as they have mentioned that there will be a greater focus on improving communication with patients that are waiting for hospital appointment and with patient after they have been discharged.

Share your views with us



If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



www.healthwatchsouthwark.org



020 7358 7005



info@healthwatchsouthwark.org



Theme two: Then and now Unpaid Carers



Then: the impact of caring on unpaid carers in Southwark

In 2019/2020 we published a report showing the impact of caring on unpaid carers in Southwark, this report was based on feedback collected via a survey and focus groups discussion with 80 local carers.

Our report found that the impact of caring was extensive, emotional and intense and poor communication with services often exacerbated this. We also found that the carer assessment process wasn't working well and also carers wanted a more varied model of support.

Another finding was the lack of trust between carers and social care staff at the Council, largely due to poor or lacking communication, and a confusing support offer. In order to help this issue we organised a roundtable event to bring carers and social care staff together over lunch to discuss the key issue and to discuss solutions.

We submitted our evidence to a Southwark Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on unpaid carers and made several recommendations to Southwark Council in the report. These recommendations were incorporated into the action plan of the 'Carers Pathway', a Council-led project to improve support for carers.



Now: improving support for carers

We continued to keep unpaid carers at the top of our priority list in 2020/21 by publishing our event report 'Supporting Carers in Southwark: Continuing the dialogue'. This provided feedback on which of our recommendations resonated most with carers.

A lot of the Carers Pathway work was paused for the Council to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, we attended a local Mental Health Carers Forum online, and held an online Signposting and Feedback session for the Alzheimer's Society Carers Support Group. We continued to hear about communication issues, and how Covid-19 had further isolated carers.



"I have never had a single day off in 30 years, because I am doing this alone. This has left me with no time to myself." (Carer)

When the Council restarted their Carers Pathway work, we attended the Carers Pathway Board meetings, and continued to push for support for carers to be improved and for carers voices to be heard.

The council have been very appreciative of our work and are actively taking our recommendations on board. The following recommendations are being implemented at this moment:

- changes to the assessment process
- planned training for practitioners around empathy and communication
- ensuring practitioners are aware of the local offer for carers
- a Carers Forum to continue the dialogue between the Council, carers and other organisations;
- more flexible and holistic approach to offering support



"I think the recommendations from the report are really going to make a big difference to the lives of carers in Southwark. We will start to see those changes taking place over the next 12 months. I am particularly happy to say that we will have a Carers Partnership forum starting next year, who will keep everyone on their toes no doubt."
(Southwark Council Service Development Officer)

In continuation of this project, we were asked to share case studies of local carers with the Council to inform their staff training and was also invited to present at the launch of Carers Week in June 2021.



To find out more > > >

Visit our key projects page on our website

<https://www.healthwatchsouthwark.org/key-projects>



Responding to Covid-19

Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.

This year we helped 4721 people by:

- Providing up to date advice on the Covid-19 response locally (website, telephone, emails)
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information (website, telephone, emails)
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out via the Community Health Ambassadors Network
- Helping people to access the services they need
- Community Health Ambassadors cascaded important health information to communities and networks to help keep people safe, resilient and informed during the pandemic. The Community Health Ambassadors also provided feedback about the situation on the ground regarding what communities had questions about, where further support was needed, and what could be improved with regards to keeping safe during the pandemic

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



59% on GP services



18% on Dentistry



28% on Hospital Care



19% on Mental Health

Case Study



During the pandemic, we heard from over 50 people about the lack of clear, accurate information about how services were affected by Covid-19. Our role became more focused on providing people with clear, consistent, and concise advice and information on our website to help address people's concerns. Over the year, our website content has been accessed by over 16,000 people, with hits on our 'Advice and Information' pages almost doubling each quarter.

The key questions people were asking included:

- How can I access NHS dental care?
- What do I do if my hospital appointment has been cancelled?
- Can I still make a complaint?



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



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Volunteers

At Healthwatch Southwark we are supported by 92 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year our volunteers:

- Supported us by reviewing our policies and terms of references for governance
- Supported us with recruiting and interviewing for volunteering roles
- Supported us with updating information on our stakeholder and information database
- Cascaded important health information to communities and networks to help keep people safe, resilient and informed during the pandemic
- Provided feedback about the situation on the ground regarding what communities had questions about, where further support was needed, and what could be improved with regards to keeping safe during the pandemic
- Participated in intelligence surveys, online community meetings and online training sessions
- Supported the team with reducing health inequalities and supporting vulnerable communities



Health Ambassador - Carole

"We've been so busy as Community Health Ambassadors. I have looked for and shared ways in which to keep people living in Southwark fed; signposting foodbanks, and where they can gain advice about their mental health. I've also signposted people who are being abused, to get help from pharmacies and other organisations that offer victim support. We've kept in contact with phone calls to the elderly who have no family at hand, delivered shopping and 'adopted' many elderly people during this time."



Advisory Board Member – Graham

"I am new to the Healthwatch Advisory Board, joined in March 2021. Apart from attending regular online meetings, I've attended patient engagement events i.e. concerns around the Covid vaccine. I've also helped recruit other Advisory Board members, worked with others to develop the group's Terms of Reference, and represented Healthwatch Southwark on the South East London Patient Group. I think it's important for there to be a local patient voice, to help improve Southwark's health and care services".



Health Ambassador- Modupe

"I joined in February with an interest in health matters. People are concerned about the side effects of the vaccine and others are still waiting to get their jab. I share information via Facebook, WhatsApp and have conversations with people on WhatsApp and SMS. I create and use my own resources as well as using information from the Ambassador Weekly Newsletters. I enjoy being part of a group of individuals interested in promoting health awareness in their community".



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at Healthwatch Southwark.



<https://www.healthwatchsouthwark.org/volunteer-us>



020 7358 7005



lizzy@healthwatchsouthwark.org

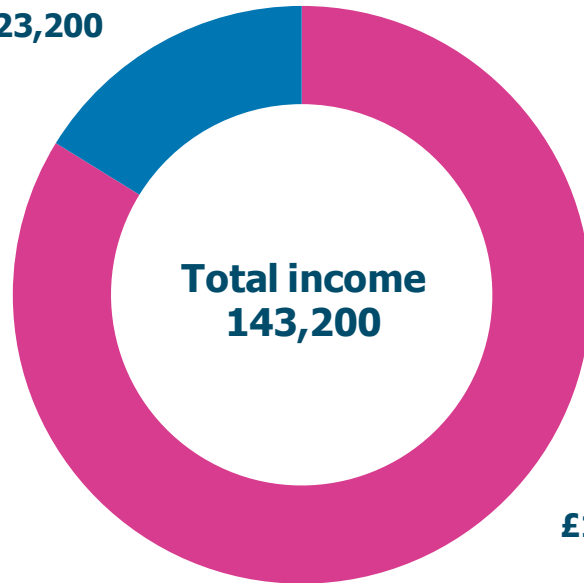
Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Additional funding

£23,200

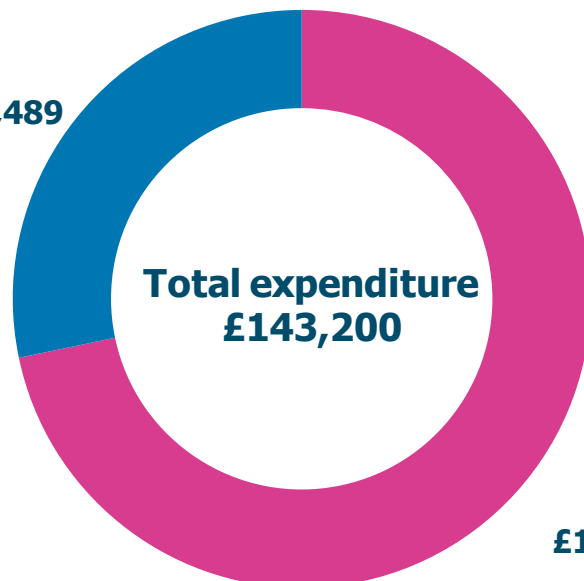


£120,000

Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs

£40,489



£102,711

Next steps & thank you

Top four priorities for 2021-22

- Mental Health (Adult and Young People)
- GP Access in post Covid-19 environment
- Developing an active Enter and View Programme
- Developing a active 'Community Engagement Strategy' that enables us to reach the different communities of Southwark and allows Healthwatch Southwark to have a effective community presence

Next steps

Our plans as we move away from national restrictions:

- Increasing our community presence in the different parts of the borough.
- Proactive outreach and engagement in the community to gather people's health and social care experiences i.e. gathering feedback at GP practice, holding local events, signposting at community centres.
- Developing our signposting function to provide more local people to access our signposting function i.e. signposting clinic in different parts of the borough, more interactive web access and more proactive support function from staff.
- Developing better partnerships with the local community and local stakeholders.
- Increase our volunteering capacity by recruiting diverse community members to volunteer and training them to support our core volunteer roles i.e. community engagement and signposting, Enter and View Representatives.
- Work with the local community and stakeholders to agree priorities.

We will actively continue to follow up on the recommendations we made last year. In relation to the 'Waiting Time' project recommendations, we are currently actively engaged with the two local NHS Trust providers (GSTT & KCH) and meeting with them to review recommendations and to discuss a way forward. We are also promoting the project findings to wider providers (i.e. South East London CCG) to increase our influence in ensuring all providers are aware of the project and its finding.

We are committed to involve and hear the experiences of all groups in Southwark and as a result in 2021/22 year we are planning to engage with the following seldom heard groups:

- Gypsies, Roma and Travellers
- Refugees
- Latin American Community
- Black Caribbean and African communities
- Young people



Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Southwark (Hosted by Community Southwark: www.communitysouthwark.org), Cambridge House, 1 Addington Square, Camberwell, London SE5 7JZ

Healthwatch Southwark 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 current Healthwatch Advisory Board consists of 10 members, all of them are new in their respective roles and were recruited from January-March 2021. The Advisory Board works on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Advisory board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Since formation the Advisory Board have met twice, but have been very active in informing our priorities for 21-22 year, they have contributed towards Healthwatch Southwark contract discussions with our host organisation and actively supported us to improve our governance i.e. redrafted the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Board to add further clarity to the governance structure and be more user-friendly.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities and use various methods to do this i.e. we undertake 'priorities surveys' to gather feedback from the community on areas that we should focus on, we gather feedback from the community via our newsletters, social media and focussed engagement events, we use intelligence from community feedback and signposting information to identify key themes/areas that we should prioritise on.

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 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, attended virtual meetings of community groups, 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 actively reaching out to people with a visual impairment through local Blind Aid and gathering their experiences of waiting for hospital treatment. We have also engaged with unpaid carers to highlight their key concerns.

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, circulate to our members, circulate to all key stakeholders i.e. CQC, NHS England, local NHS Trusts, Local Authority Committees/Commissioning Team, Clinical Commissioning Group, community organisations, local health and social care providers.

2020-21 Priorities

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Carers Project	Findings were included in a JSNA on unpaid carers, and recommendations were incorporated into the local authority's Carers Pathway project intervention framework
Covid-19 Experience Survey (April/May 20)	People with mental health conditions were included in recovery engagement. Led to better information on local provider websites regarding dental access
Covid-19 Project (February/March 21)	The findings of these events have been incorporated into SEL CCG's Covid-19 vaccination plans.
Waiting Times Project	Recommendations being discussed with key stakeholders and we hope to see impact 2021/22

Responses to recommendations and requests

All of the local health and social care providers that we engaged with responded to our requests for information and responded to recommendations made.

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.

We shared intelligence with Healthwatch England in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on GP access by phone and access to dental services. This intelligence was shared in a Healthwatch England report to inform national recommendations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Southwark is represented on the Southwark Health and Wellbeing Board by Shamsur Choudhury, Healthwatch Southwark Manager. During 2020/21, our role by attending the meetings was to represent local peoples views on emerging issues under discussion, we presented our report on local people experiences of health and social care during the pandemic (barriers, challenges faced and what was helping them). Our Community Health Ambassadors Network work was also presented to the Board and well received. Currently the Health and Wellbeing Board is reviewing its operational function and we are part these developmental meetings, this will allow us to review how we can be more actively involved and have increased influence on the agenda and discussions of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

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