

The value of listening

Healthwatch Sutton
Annual Report 2023-2024



Contents

Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Year in review	5
How we've made a difference this year	6
Your voice heard at a wider level	7
Listening to your experiences	9
Hearing from all communities	13
Advice and information	15
Volunteering	17
Finance and future priorities	19
Statutory statements	21

Cover photos by Tony Monblat, used under Creative Commons licence, available through flickr.com



“Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people’s views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities.”

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair



I am delighted and honoured to take on the role of Chair of Trustees, knowing I am working alongside a very committed and able team of volunteers, staff and of course, my fellow trustees. At Healthwatch Sutton we are well aware of the many changes taking place within health and social care as services introduce new ways of working, in particular involving the greater use of digital technology, as they attempt to meet the growing demand for care. For these changes to be as successful as we all hope they will be, and to ensure that no-one gets left out or left behind in the process, it is crucial that services are able to hear the views and experiences of their patients. Thus Healthwatch has a particularly important part to play at this time of change, and I am very pleased that one of our current pieces of work is focusing on patients' experiences of GP services, including booking appointments.



This year we have completed a major piece of work on the mental wellbeing of primary school children, which has highlighted an overall decline in their mental health since the pandemic. We have also continued to provide regular information services through our monthly newsletter and supporting regular patient involvement through the Patient Reference Group. We also now work in coordination with Healthwatches across South West London. In the year to come we are planning major pieces of work around patients' experience of GP services and of hospital maternity services.

I'd like to thank all our staff and volunteers for their dedication and hard work. In particular, I'd like to pay tribute to four longstanding trustees who left our board at the AGM – Barbara McIntosh, our former Chair; Adrian Attard, our former Treasurer; Adrian Bonner; and Launa Watson, who is now enjoying a well-deserved retirement in Jamaica. Welcome too to Mahendra Patel, our new Treasurer. I look forward to continuing to work with you all in the year to come.

Janet Wingrove
Chair
Healthwatch Sutton

About us

Healthwatch Sutton is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and 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 and mission

Our **vision** is a world where we can all get the health and care we need.

Our **mission** is 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. We work with other local organisations which provide advice and information as part of Together for Sutton.

Our staff

Pete Flavell
Chief Executive

Andrew McDonald
Health Engagement
Project Officer

Colin Wilson
Communication and
Engagement Officer

Lorraine Davis
Team Administrator

South West London Team

Alyssa Chase-Vilchez
Executive Officer,
Healthwatch rep to
SW London ICS

Iyinoluwa Oshinowo
Engagement Coordinator

Year in review

Reaching out:

1,156 people

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



519 people

came to our partners at Together for Sutton for advice about health topics, and for support with making formal complaints to the NHS.

Making a difference to care:

We published

3 reports

about people's health and their experiences with health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

The mental wellbeing of 9-11 year olds in Sutton



Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

10 outstanding volunteers

who gave up **17 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2023-24 we received

£93,359

which is **3.8% more** than in 2022-23.

We currently employ

6 staff

who help us carry out our work.



How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>Trustees met with senior staff from Sutton Council to better understand the borough's changing population.</p>	 <p>Staff continued to encourage the ICB to develop new models of provision for dentistry.</p>
Summer	 <p>We celebrated our tenth anniversary at an event strengthening our links with local stakeholders.</p>	 <p>We regularly attended outreach sessions organised by Wallington Wellbeing Charity and at other local venues.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We improved our liaison with local NHS staff by regularly attending meetings of the four local Integrated Neighbourhood Teams.</p>	 <p>Trustees met with the Director of Sutton Primary Care Networks to discuss local issues about services at GP practices.</p>
Winter	 <p>We published our report on the mental wellbeing of local primary school children.</p>	 <p>We began developing a leaflet explaining new ways for people to access primary care services</p>

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Sutton influence decisions made about services at South West London Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

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



We helped ensure continued availability of virtual wards to South West London residents. We spoke with people in Croydon, Merton, and Wandsworth to understand their views about virtual wards. Our report was referenced in a South West London-wide business case that successfully extended the virtual wards programme, which helps people stay out of hospitals and receive treatment at home where possible.

We worked with partners to advocate for more accessible dentistry services. We have been working alongside dentists, NHS management, and public health colleagues as part of a new initiative that aims to bring dental services to the people that struggle the most with access, and to help support preventative care.



We employed a South West London Engagement Coordinator. We welcomed Iyinoluwa Oshinowo, who formerly worked in academic mental health research, to our team to help strengthen our capacity to undertake collaborative community engagement across South West London boroughs, including work on virtual wards and the Accessible Information Standard.

We strengthened the SW London ICS's digital inclusion strategy. The ICS is rolling out digital platforms and apps to help streamline access to care and support people in self-managing their conditions. We helped ensure that people who are digitally excluded because of poor access to devices or the internet, lack of comfort with digital platforms, disability, and/or low English skills are still able to access services and support.



Accessible information standard

South West London Healthwatch organisations have won a grant from the ICS to collaboratively engage with people living with certain disabilities and their carers to improve how GP practices meet their communication and health information needs.

In this work, we aim to improve adherence to the Accessible Information Standard, legal guidance that describes how practices should meet the communication and health information needs of people with certain disabilities that affect communication.

To progress this work, we have already:

- Built relationships with voluntary sector organisations that support people living with disabilities that affect communication, including D/deafness, blindness, neurodiverse conditions, learning disability, and neurological conditions.
- Collaborated with GP practices to understand the enablers and barriers to implementing the Standard.

Empowering the ICS to take a patient-centred approach

We provide representation on 12 different South West London Integrated ICS committees and working groups focused on issues ranging from maternity to end of life care.

- These committees draw together representatives from the NHS, Healthwatch, the voluntary sector, and local authority.
- The committees include those dedicated to maternity and children and young people's health, mental health, older people's health, and disease prevention and inequalities.
- We initiated and co-facilitate a working group comprised of other Healthwatch organisations nationally to discuss how to maximise our impact and influence on these ICS committees.

In 2023, South West London Healthwatch organisations collaborated closely with the ICS Patient and Public Engagement team to ensure that our residents influence decisions about their health and care. With the support of this team, Healthwatch helped embed learnings from over 1,000 residents into the ICS's five-year strategy documents, which contain a list of initiatives that directly address residents' concerns.

We now represent the patient voice on new ICS committees and working groups dedicated to providing oversight of ICS strategy delivery. These committees provide us with a platform to shape the implementation of projects using insights we have heard from patients, carers and the public. We also champion best practices in engagement and encourage ICS colleagues to use these in developing new health and care initiatives.



Listening to your experiences

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

Improving mental health support for children

We surveyed over 1,000 Sutton children aged 9 to 11 about their mental wellbeing, and compared the results with a survey of children the same age we completed just before the pandemic. Children's mental health has got worse.

Key findings

- **Many children have poor mental health**
Over half of the children we surveyed have had trouble sleeping or have felt lonely.
- **Children's mental health has got worse since the pandemic**
The proportion who have had trouble sleeping has increased by 17 percent and those who have felt lonely by 16 percent.
- **Girls had more problems than boys**
Almost six out of ten girls have felt lonely, but only four out of ten boys have.
- **Children feel less able to rely on parents**
Before the pandemic, 63 percent of children said they would go to their parents if they had a problem. Now only 54 percent say this.
- **Children use social media for which they aren't old enough**
Three quarters of the children use social media, though almost all of the platforms they use have minimum ages of 13 or 16. The number of children saying that they are free to look at anything online without adult supervision has increased slightly.
- **Children worry less about SATs and going to secondary school**
There has been a marked reduction in the numbers of children who were very unhappy or unhappy about these topics.

The action we took

- We sent the report to Sutton Council, to South West London ICB and to South West London St George's NHS Trust, which provides mental health services in Sutton.
- All these bodies wrote formal responses to the report.
- We also wrote individual reports for each of the ten schools which had taken part in the survey.
- We organised two meetings for parents and carers at the schools we surveyed.
- We presented the report at the local Health and Wellbeing board, where a whole meeting was dedicated to discussing the issues it raised.
- We met with the Head of Children's Services at Sutton Council to discuss the report.
- We sent our report to Healthwatch England, who shared it with the minister responsible for children's health.

Children's mental health: developing a response

As well as highlighting these problems, we wanted to investigate possible solutions. We examined whether a social prescribing project would help provide more support for primary school pupils' mental health.

- We carried out a scoping exercise to assess whether a social prescribing project could be developed in the borough.
- A social prescribing project which supports secondary school students exists in the neighbouring borough of Merton and is funded by South West London ICB. We met with their staff to discuss launching a similar project for primary school pupils in Sutton.
- We met with the ICB to discuss development plans, including a design event for a wide range of stakeholders.

What difference did we make?

- Professionals such as teachers were already concerned about pupils' mental wellbeing. We were able to back up their concerns with robust research and statistics.
- We raised awareness of this issue with local and national stakeholders.
- We took steps towards developing a project that we hope will address some of these issues.

Liaising with key local stakeholders

It's vital for us to be aware of the work of a wide variety of local stakeholders. As well as bimonthly board meetings, our trustees hold regular sessions where they can hear about key local issues. This year these meetings have included:

- A discussion with the Managing Director of Sutton Primary Care Networks
- A presentation by Council staff on demographic changes in the borough
- A discussion with Sutton Council Commissioned Care Manager on new tendering arrangements and the Tech Enabled Care Manager on use of new technology

The meetings play a key role in our work. For example, developing our relationship with PCN staff meant that they agreed to email out a link to our GP survey to all Sutton patients with an email address.

Addressing concerns about hospital repairs and redevelopment

In May 2023 we were disturbed to read media reports that buildings at St Helier Hospital were in a “shocking state of disrepair”. ITV News reported that one ward was closed because its foundations were sinking, an Intensive Care Unit was shut because it was impossible to install a modern ventilation system, and maternity ward reception experienced regular leaks through the ceiling.

Improvements to the hospital are planned as part of the New Hospital Programme.

The action we took

- We wrote to the Managing Director of the Hospital Trust, who assured us that the hospital did everything it could to provide safe and effective care, while commenting that “our patients deserve a better environment” for their care.
- We highlighted on our website that plans for the New Hospital Programme were not moving forwards.
- We continued to raise awareness of issues with hospital redevelopment, publishing summaries of reports by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, both of which raised serious concerns with the New Hospital Programme.
- In February 2024, the CQC rated the St Helier maternity unit as requiring improvement, due to problems with the building and other issues. We are planning a project around maternity care for 2024–25.

Bringing stakeholders together for our 10th anniversary

Key local stakeholders including the Mayor of Sutton and the leader of Sutton Council joined staff, trustees, volunteers and staff from other voluntary organisations to celebrate our anniversary and hear about our recent work.





Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Attending outreach events targetting deprived local communities
- Supporting groups like the Patient Reference Group, which represents patients from most surgeries in Sutton
- Working with GPs to improve their compliance with the Accessible Information Standard, improving services for disabled people.

Helping ensure all patients' voices are heard

We support local groups which ensure that both GP practices and staff from South West London ICB hear from patients about their experiences of care services.

Patient Participation Groups

Every GP practice now runs a Patient Participation Group or PPG, where patients can provide feedback. In Sutton there are 19 PPGs.

- We regularly shared information with all local PPGs about opportunities for further patient engagement, such as the consultation on Sutton Council's Dementia Strategy.
- Staff attended meetings of four PPGs, offering advice and support for recruiting members, and information about how PPGs can contribute to NHS patient engagement in Sutton.



Patient Reference Group

Each PPG sends delegates to the Patient Reference Group or PRG, which hears speakers and feeds back to ICB staff about local services. Healthwatch staff provide admin support for the PRG.

- We supported five PRG meetings, which discussed GP surgery websites, mental health services, general changes to accessing GP services, learning disability access to GP services and dental services.
- The group heard speakers from Sutton Primary Care Networks, Sutton Place (South West London ICS), South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust and Sutton Local Dental Committee.
- The PRG gave feedback to support two projects, one around learning disability and hidden disability access to primary care, and another around patient experience of access changes at GP practices.



GP experience survey

We worked with other local stakeholders to carry out a large patient survey in March and April 2024. We will publish a report in the summer of 2024.

- Our survey was shared by Sutton PCNs, Volunteer Centre Sutton and Sutton Patient Reference Group.





Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Sutton is part of the Together for Sutton network. We provide information through our website and newsletter, and our colleagues at Advocacy for All and Citizens Advice Sutton provide free and confidential advice and support on health and care issues.

This year we've helped people by:

- Sending out a regular newsletter to our mailing list of over 400 people
- Producing materials explaining changes to NHS services
- Working with Citizens Advice Sutton and Advocacy for All to provide advice and support services

Keeping people up to date with health issues

We send out a monthly newsletter to over 400 people. We know that people find the newsletter useful because mailings have been opened by an average 44% of recipients, some 10% above the average for charity mailings.

We also regularly attended outreach events at venues including Holy Trinity Wallington, the Phoenix Centre and St Helier Festival.

Providing advice and information

We work with Citizens Advice Sutton to provide information and advice about health and care issues. In 2023-24 they dealt with:

456 enquiries, a 19% increase on last year

They report that “we are getting a number of calls about dentists and accessing their services. The calls around accessing care homes, charges and fees and financial assessments for care.” The topics which came up the most were as follows:

Community care 152

Local services 28

Care Homes 26

Hospital Services 51

Adult Social services 27

Children’s Services 14

Dentists 35

GPs 26

Other 97

Supporting people making formal complaints

We work with Advocacy for All, who support people who make formal complaints to the NHS about the care they, or those close to them, have received. They dealt with:

63 referrals, a 29% increase on last year

The main areas of complaint were 13 complaints about quality of health care, 13 complaints about mental health services and 11 complaints about the quality of secondary care. 60% of their clients were women. 66% were white, while 24% were Asian. Clients were of all ages, with the largest number aged 46 to 55.



Volunteering

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

This year our volunteers:

- Carried out Enter and View visits to help local care homes improve what they do
- Helped raise awareness of Healthwatch and health issues by supporting our outreach and publicity work
- Provided admin support for key tasks such as organising our AGM

Our volunteers provide vital support to Healthwatch Sutton, helping us with tasks including Enter and View visits, admin support and outreach work.

The photo shows volunteer Sheila Gooljar with Andrew McDonald, our Health Engagement Project Officer, at St Helier Festival.



We're especially grateful to volunteers who act as Healthwatch Sutton trustees, bringing their years of experience and in-depth knowledge to the role.

Launa Watson left our board this year after eight years, and is retiring to live in Jamaica – the photo shows our goodbye event with trustees and staff.

Our longstanding volunteer and former trustee Shri Mehrotra, also shown in the photo, comments that “volunteering with Healthwatch Sutton has been an invaluable experience and has equipped me with up to date knowledge and new skills.”



Do you feel inspired?



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

🌐 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.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from LB Sutton	£93,359	Expenditure on pay	£196,240
Additional income	£151,768	Non-pay expenditure	£28,126
		Office and management fees	£26,835
Total income	£245,127	Total expenditure	£251,201

Additional income is broken down by:

- £41,768 received from NHS bodies for support of PPGs and the PRG, surveys of patient experiences etc.
- £110,000 received from SW London ICS for joint work between local Healthwatch.

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, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
South West London ICB funding to support collaborative South West London work	£110,000

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. Carrying out an assessment of local maternity services.
2. Talking to users of domiciliary care services about the care they received.
3. Reporting on services provided by local pharmacists, for example regarding the availability of medications.



Statutory statements

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

**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 five members who work on a voluntary basis 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 2023/24, the Board met six times and made decisions on matters such as agreeing the draft budget for the year and assessing regular reports on project work.

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 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending 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 make printed copies available from our office and as part of our outreach events work.

Responses to recommendations

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so 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 that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and the Sutton Place Communications Staff Group.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in SW London ICS. For example, in collaboration with other SW London Healthwatch we are represented on thirteen ICS committees and working groups. 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, our Chief Executive. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by raising issues including an entire meeting discussing children's mental health in response to our report on this issue.

Healthwatch Sutton is represented on the South West London Integrated Care Partnership and Integrated Care Board by Alyssa Chase-Vilchez, who is also a member of the Children, Young People, and Maternity System Board, the Dentistry steering group, the Health Inequalities Board, the Older People Delivery Group, the Mental Health Partnership Delivery Group, the Mental Health Delivery Group, the Patient & Community Engagement Group, the Patient Experience and Engagement Group, the South London Research Collaborative and the System Quality Council. Our staff member Iyinoluwa Oshinowa is a member of the South West London Mental Health Co-production Working Group.

Enter and view

This year, we made six Enter and View visits. We made no recommendations or actions as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Six care homes in the London Borough of Sutton	Quality assurance in liaison with Sutton Council	Reported findings to Sutton Council

2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Survey of mental wellbeing of over 1,000 primary school pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report published • Formal response from LB Sutton and NHS bodies, dedicated session of local Health and Wellbeing Board • Feedback to participating schools and parents/carers • Scoping of social prescribing project
Liaison with other SW London Healthwatch and with SW London ICS bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports produced on virtual wards and patient experience • Collaborative work on dentistry, digital inclusion and access to GP services
Support for patient participation through PPGs and the PRG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided information to all PPGs and attended 4, supported PRG including 5 meetings
Gathered feedback on mental health and palliative care services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of 68 patients reported to health/care providers
Monthly newsletter sent to over 400 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 newsletters sent, including public health information and local health news



Healthwatch Sutton

Granfers Centre
73-79 Oakhill Road
Sutton
SM1 3AA

🌐 www.healthwatchsutton.org.uk

☎ 020 8641 9540

✉ info@healthwatchsutton.org.uk

📘 facebook.com/Healthwatchsutton

✂ x.com/healthwatchsut