

# Healthwatch East Sussex

## Quarter 1 Report 2025 – 2026

1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025



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## About Healthwatch East Sussex

Healthwatch East Sussex is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and local council 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.



## About this report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the activity, publications and impact delivered by the Healthwatch programme in East Sussex this quarter.

# Quarterly Dashboard



## Highlights of the quarter

### Launch of the new Healthwatch East Sussex (HWES) website

In April, we shared the new HWES [website](#). The new site offers improved navigation, and a fresh, user-friendly design. One of the biggest changes was our new [Feedback Centre](#). This now makes it easier and quicker to share your experiences of health and social care services.

### GP transformation team

Following our [mystery shop](#) of GP websites and phone messages in line with Modern General Practice, we were invited to meet with representatives from NHS Sussex's Digital Transformation Team. We shared some of our key findings and discussed how our recommendations could be implemented.

### Engaging with the commercial fishing community

During May we participated in the SeaFit health and wellbeing event in Newhaven, organised by The Fishermen's Mission. We provided an Information and Signposting drop-in session and gathered feedback about the fishing community's experience of health and care services.

### Working in partnership with Care for the Carers

In June we attended the Care for the Carers annual East Sussex 'Carers Voices' conference in Eastbourne. We listened to carers' experiences of health and care services, including hospital discharge. A Young Healthwatch volunteer gave a speech about his experience of balancing education with caring for a parent.

### Presenting our HMP Lewes report

During June we presented findings from our report on HMP Lewes residents' experiences of health and care to the East Sussex Communication and Engagement Steering Group. We highlighted what was working well, as well as areas for improvement, based on what we heard from residents during our work.

### Healthwatch East Sussex annual report publication

At the end of June, we were delighted to share '[Unlocking the power of people-driven care](#)', our Annual Report for 2024-25. It highlights how we have listened to the voices of the public, patients and partners and used feedback, experiences and preferences to shape local health and social care in East Sussex.



## Listening Tour

### Who we have engaged

This quarter, we continued our Listening Tour in Hastings, hearing from 69 people about their health and care experiences. We attended a range of groups including a Care for the Carers support group, as well as holding a Listening Tour drop-in morning for the public, and our Listening Tour workshop for stakeholders.

### What we've heard

In Hastings, we heard that accessing services can be challenging for those who rely on public transport, particularly when accessing healthcare services outside of Hastings. We heard people felt there is a lack of understanding of some health conditions, leading to people having to repeatedly explain what support they do and don't need when accessing community, as well as healthcare, settings.

We also heard that many GP practices in Hastings have recently developed their websites, making it easier for patients to find information and to access services online. However, many patients are not aware of their practice's website, and more needs to be done to promote GP practice websites and the services that can be accessed through them.

### What we've done with your views

This quarter, we published [our report](#) on the Hastings Listening Tour and shared its findings and recommendations with local decision-makers. We also published our Listening Tour [summary report](#), bringing together the information from our three listening tours undertaken in 2024-25.

In quarter 2, we will present this summary report to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board, ensuring the feedback heard throughout our Listening Tours is heard and responded to by decision-makers.

Following on from what we've heard during the Listening Tour, we have continued to share feedback about patient transport with EMED, the provider of non-emergency patient transport in East Sussex, as well as continuing to feed into the local transport plan for East Sussex, raising awareness of the need for improved transport provision to healthcare services.

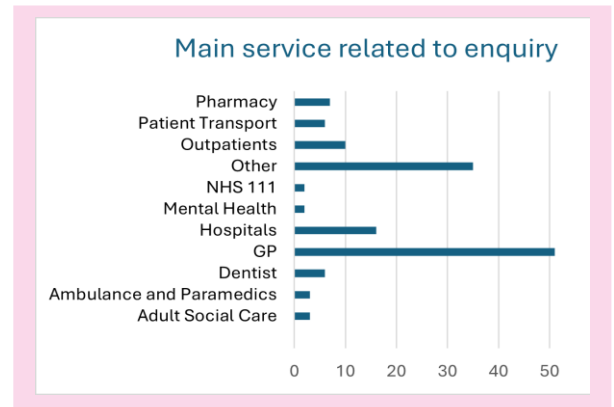
## Information and Signposting

### Who we have engaged

We received 141 enquiries to our I&S service this quarter, via our telephone line, emails and web-based contacts, as well as by providing drop-in sessions at community venues.

### What we've heard

GP services were the top theme of enquiries for each month in quarter one and remain the service that I&S hears about most frequently. Hospitals and Outpatients were the second and third most common theme of enquiry, followed by Pharmacy services.



### What we've done with your views

We shared issues that we heard about via enquiries at our liaison meetings with providers and commissioners of services. These meetings have helped to resolve individual concerns and bring trends to the attention of those that run or manage services.

### Case study

We heard from an individual who had been diagnosed with ADHD via a Right to Choose provider and had hoped to be prescribed medication via their Titration Service. However, following diagnosis, the patient was discharged back to their GP, who was unable to prescribe medication or help with any treatment.

The individual did not know what to do as they were not given any advice from the provider or from their GP as to what their options were. Our Information and Signposting service contacted the ADHD service provider to clarify their service provision and eligibility criteria. It became clear that, if agreed, the GP could submit another referral for their patient to access the service provider's Titration Service. The caller was pleased to understand the patient pathway for accessing treatment and grateful for the help from I&S.



## Projects

### Women's Health survey

In April-May 2025, we ran a survey asking women and girls aged 14+ about their experiences of health and care. 188 people shared their experiences with us.

We heard about some of the key barriers that prevent women from accessing healthcare services. These include: a lack of flexibility in appointment times; worries about not feeling listened to; and negative past experiences. Women told us that better booking systems, easier to access appointments, and knowing who they were going to see would make it easier for them to attend.

When asked about where they'd like to access a women's health hub, individuals' own GP practice was the most popular option.

We reported the survey findings back to NHS Sussex in June and made 15 recommendations based on what women and girls told us. These included recommendations for planning, designing and implementing women's health hubs, and recommendations for women's health care across the wider health and care system. The report will be published next quarter.

### COVID vaccinations

This spring, we received funding from NHS Sussex to promote the 2025 Spring COVID-19 vaccination programme in the Hastings area, where there is a lower-than-average uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations.

We aimed to raise awareness of who was eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination and where, when and how people could access vaccinations. Our work focused on several key cohorts including people living in care homes, people over 75 years old and people who are immunosuppressed.

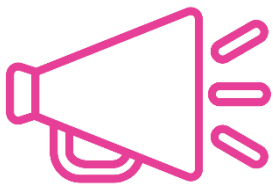
We shared physical and digital promotional materials and information on the vaccination programme with several key partners including local VCSE organisations, pharmacies and GPs. We also shared materials on our website, in our monthly newsletter and in an email bulletin.

## Web testing for East Sussex County Council

This quarter, six Healthwatch volunteers supported the testing of the East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health website to inform the development of information and advice for residents.

Healthwatch volunteers were recruited to test information in seven scenarios. These scenarios included finding information on falls, equipment, direct payments, carers, paying for care, personal care, and safeguarding. The scenarios were based on the themes most searched for on the website.

The six Healthwatch volunteers included young and older people, ethnically diverse people, retired health and social care professionals, and people with lived experience. The feedback from the volunteers helped East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health to understand how the journey for people to find information on their website could be improved.



### Did you know?

Healthwatch East Sussex represent you at **over 40 meetings quarterly** including the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and the Sussex Health and Care Assembly.





## Volunteer Updates

This quarter, our volunteers were involved in a range of activities with health and social care partners:

- Developing surveys to support the NHS Sussex Youth Panel, including a survey on nutrition and dietary needs, and another on young people's understanding of Patient Participation Groups (PPGs).
- Mapping PPGs across East Sussex, with a view to future collaboration.
- User testing of the East Sussex Adult Social Care website (see page 7).

We also held a volunteer meeting with a presentation on our Information and Signposting Service, and we organised a volunteer celebration event to mark Volunteers Week in June with a visit to Bates Green Garden near Arlington.

**Do you want to make a difference to health and social care in your area?** We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please [get in touch](#) today.




## How can Healthwatch help you

Healthwatch can help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

If you need information or support to access health and care services, please contact our information and signposting service. We can help you to:

- Navigate health and social care services and support groups near you.
- Get information about what you can do when you have concerns or a complaint.
- Find out about support, advocacy services, safeguarding and patient rights.
- Share feedback about services.

### How to contact us

-  [www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk](http://www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk)
-  0333 101 4007
-  [enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk)

## The East Sussex Picture

### Dissolution of Healthwatch

In late June, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) [announced](#) that local Healthwatch will be dissolved and its functions will be transferred to local authorities (social care) and Integrated Care Boards (health) in future. We will share further details and timeframes for this change once known.

In the meantime, we remain committed to gathering patient and public voice, offering information and signposting support, and undertaking our projects in the same dedicated way. All our existing activities, projects and meetings will go ahead as planned. Our full statement on the announcement is [on our website](#).

### Changes to Integrated Care Boards (ICB)

Following requirements to make significant financial savings, NHS England accepted Sussex ICB's proposal to collaborate with Surrey ICB and work towards a single ICB covering both areas by early 2026. Reconfiguration is underway to reduce operating costs whilst maintaining duties and functions.

### Devolution and local government re-organisation in Sussex

East Sussex County Council and local authorities consulted residents in May-June on proposed options for local government re-organisation. This may involve replacing the county council and local authorities with a single authority. Final proposals will be submitted to central government in September, and if approved, a new council will be elected in 2027 and begin operating in 2028.

### Sussex Surgical Centre

Very soon we hope to see the opening of the new [Sussex Surgical Centre](#), a modern, purpose-built day surgery unit, at the District General Hospital site in Eastbourne. This will hopefully allow Sussex residents to have day surgery performed quickly and in a purpose-built environment. Healthwatch is planning to engage and share insight from patients using the service later in 2025-26.

### NHS 10 Year Plan

The [NHS 10 Year Plan](#) was published on 3<sup>rd</sup> July and sets out how the government is seeking to reinvent the NHS through three shifts: hospital to community; analogue to digital; and sickness to prevention. This was informed by the [Dash review](#) of patient safety across the health and care landscape.

## Coming up next

**Pharmacy project:** This year we will be working to better understand the provision of pharmacy services across the county and how pharmacies are meeting local needs. This will include targeted engagement with pharmacy staff and pharmacy users, as well as a light touch audit of provision and accessibility.

**Domiciliary care project:** We will look at people's experience of Joint Community Rehabilitation (JCR) services in their own homes. This will include people's involvement in setting their own goals and whether this is directly linked to the support they will receive.

**Mental health project:** Over the next year, we will be working with NHS Sussex and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT) to evaluate the implementation of Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams (NMHTs) in East Sussex. This will include reporting on feedback from the service users' evaluation survey, which will be shared with those who have accessed NMHTs.

**Listening Tour Rother:** Our next Listening Tour will take place in Rother, with an updated approach to ensure we hear from as wide a range of people as possible. In September, we will hold a Listening Tour event, with further information about this to be shared soon.

To find out more about the different ways you can get involved with Healthwatch East Sussex please visit our [website](#) or get in touch using the details at the end of this report.

## Chief Executive's Comment

This quarter has been both busy and productive, with key achievements and stronger partnerships across our work. We took part in over 60 meetings, ensuring local voices were heard and represented in strategic discussions. Our projects continue to grow in scope and impact, reflecting our commitment to improving health and social care.

We are concerned about the Department of Health's announcement on the planned dissolution of Healthwatch services. In particular about the potential loss of an independent and trusted body that enables people to share their experiences.

Despite these uncertainties, we remain focused on delivering our work. Looking ahead, we have significant projects planned to help shape local services and ensure community voices remain central.

## Recent Publications

[Healthwatch Listening Tour 2024/25: Summary Report](#)

[Healthwatch East Sussex Annual Report 2024-25: Unlocking the power of people-driven care](#)

[2024-25 Listening Tour Area Report: Hastings](#)

[Poll Results: Supporting Carers to attend their own healthcare appointments](#)

['You Said – We Did' May 2025](#)

[Pathways to Emergency Departments and Urgent Treatment Centre's](#)

[Your Satisfaction with local NHS Services](#)


['You Said – We Did' April 2025](#)

[Healthwatch East Sussex Quarter 4 Report – January to March 2025](#)

[Your Experiences of Vaccinations](#)


['You Said – We Did' March 2025](#)





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