

Healthwatch East Sussex

Quarter 1 Report 2026 – 2027

1st April 2026 – 30th June 2026



Contents

Quarterly Dashboard.....	2
Highlights of the quarter.....	3
Listening Tour	4
Information and Signposting	5
Projects	6
Volunteer Updates	8
How can Healthwatch help you?	8
The East Sussex Picture	9
Coming up next	10
Chief Executive’s Comment	10
Recent Publications.....	11

About Healthwatch East Sussex

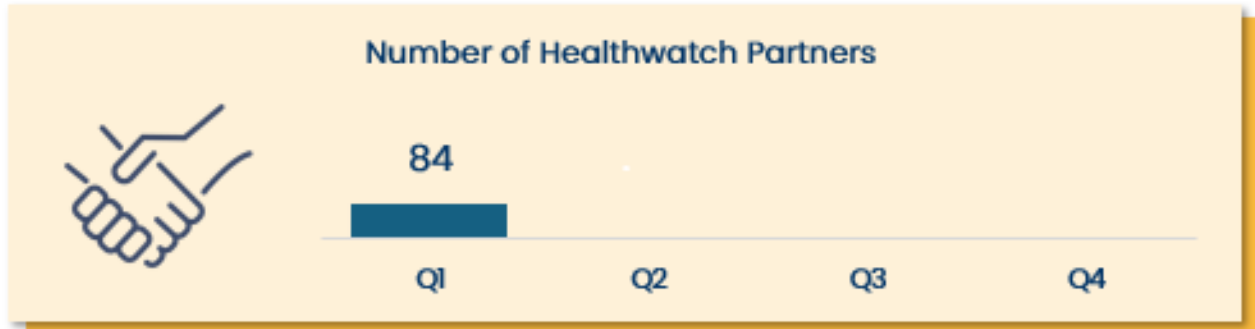
Healthwatch East Sussex is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and local council decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



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

999 weekend

At the end of May, we spoke to 174 individuals as part of the Eastbourne 999 weekend. We heard from a range of people about their experiences of health and care services including GPs, dentistry, pharmacy, audiology, adult social care and mental health services, amongst others.

Prescription Pre-payment Certificate mystery shopping

In early June, we visited 19 pharmacies across Eastbourne to ask about the sale of prescription prepayment certificates. Most pharmacies advised patients about how to purchase certificates online, but two pharmacies supported people to buy certificates with cash. We shared this with relevant partners.

Funding awarded for work with armed forces veterans

In June we were successful in our application to the Community Knowledge Fund for work engaging with local veterans. We will use conversational and participatory approaches to explore veterans' experiences of accessing primary care and identifying how services can better meet their needs.

Volunteers' Week

During June we celebrated [Volunteers' Week](#) – an opportunity to recognise and thank our volunteers for their support and contributions to the work of Healthwatch East Sussex. As part of this, we visited Herstmonceux Castle with some of our volunteers for tea, cake and a walk around the gardens.

Stakeholder survey

In April, we heard from colleagues in other organisations about their experiences of working with us. We were pleased to receive positive feedback across the health sector, local authority, and voluntary and community sector. Colleagues highlighted our professionalism and integrity in representing community voices, and fed back that our team is collaborative, knowledgeable and reliable.



Did you know?

Healthwatch East Sussex is part of a [network](#) of over 150 local Healthwatch, working together to use your feedback to better understand the challenges facing health and care providers.

Listening Tour

Who we have engaged

This quarter, we published our Eastbourne Listening Tour report, sharing the feedback of the 131 people we heard from as part of this work through our online survey, in-person engagement, information and signposting service and Listening Tour workshop.

What we've heard

During the Eastbourne Listening Tour we heard about people's experiences of long waits to hear from or access services following a referral from another service. People shared that in some cases they had forgotten they had been referred in the first place, as they had not received any information about the progress of their referral during the waiting period. We also heard about people's difficulty in accessing secondary care where a referral from a primary care provider is needed, with challenges accessing GP appointments causing issues for some.

Alongside this, we heard about the importance of the voluntary sector in supporting people's health and wellbeing needs. Those taking part in our Listening Tour workshop highlighted the necessity of the statutory and voluntary sectors working together to ensure that people can receive the best care and support possible for their needs.

What we've done with your views

We share the feedback we receive through our Listening Tours with providers to highlight what is working well and where improvements could be made. Our Listening Tour also helps to inform our current and future work. Examples include:

- Raising the lack of a treatment pathway for those with Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) with Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust following feedback shared as part of our Rother Listening Tour.
- Working with GP practices to look at how accessible and user-friendly their telephone systems, website and practice sites are for patients with different needs.
- Sharing insight from the local Listening Tours with the relevant place-based Integrated Community Teams for health and care services to inform their priorities and future activities.

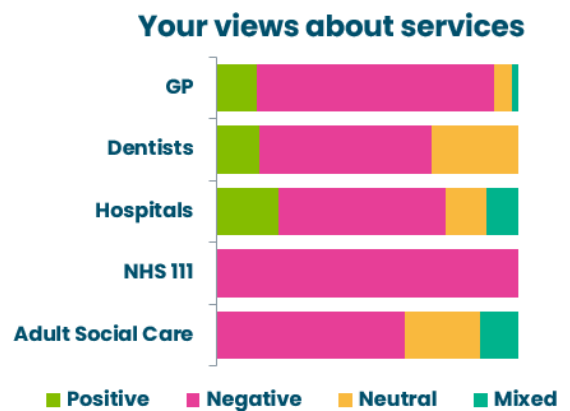
Information and Signposting

This quarter, our [Information and Signposting service](#) received 144 public enquiries from phone calls, emails, web-based contacts, and engagement activities. We helped people to navigate services and provided advice about concerns and complaints.

Key themes from enquiries

This quarter, we heard about:

- **GP services** – patients having a long wait to receive a phone or face-to-face appointment, feedback to suggest the '8am rush' remains an issue and some practices limiting access methods for patients to request appointments.
- **Hospitals** – we received a range of feedback regarding hospital services, including limited access to onsite parking and a lack of understanding and support for neurodivergent patients, as well as positive feedback about staff.
- We've also heard about long waits for NHS complaints resolutions, inaccuracies in patient records, the quality and cost of home care services and lack of support in primary care for diabetic patients.



What we have done

This quarter, we have:

- Escalated concerns from enquiries to providers and commissioners of services regarding the decommissioning of community dermatology services, paediatric rheumatology clinics, and issues relating to NHS complaints.
- Compiled feedback and insights received about End of Life and Palliative Care services that will be used by East Sussex County Council Public Health team for a comprehensive needs assessment.
- Produced a public-facing article about self-referral health services.
- Delivered Information & Signposting training to the Healthwatch East Sussex staff team to help them respond to enquiries whilst at community events and engagement activities.
- Signposted to a range of organisations including [Possability People](#), [Citizens Advice](#), [Mencap](#) and services available via [UOK](#) which provides mental health and wellbeing support in East Sussex.

Projects

Sussex Surgical Centre

In February this year, Healthwatch volunteers visited the Sussex Surgical Centre at Eastbourne District General Hospital to undertake an environmental audit and observe the waiting area. Following on from this, a survey was included in the discharge packs of Sussex Surgical Centre patients this quarter, and this was completed by 30 people.

The feedback provided by patients was very positive, with 90% rating their overall experience as excellent. A report was drafted and shared with East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT) making six recommendations about patient information, parking and reception. These included asking ESHT to improve the visual patient information available, including information available in other formats, the translation service, and how to leave feedback. ESHT were also asked to consider installing a hearing loop at reception. A representative from ESHT thanked Healthwatch for the report, noting that quotations have been sought for additional signage and the key findings have been shared with centre staff.

Nicotine pouches

This quarter, we published our report on children and young people's views and experiences of nicotine pouches, which drew on feedback from 130 young people from across East Sussex. They shared a range of views and experiences with us, with the work highlighting the lack of information about the potential health and wellbeing effects of nicotine pouches, as well as the lack of support for people who would like to stop using them.

To build on this work, this quarter we launched an all-age survey to take a deeper dive into people's experiences of nicotine pouches, with the survey also looking at whether people are smoking or vaping alongside using nicotine pouches. We will share our findings next quarter.

Men's mental health partnership project

In Q1, we began work with Compass Arts on engaging men with serious mental illness on their experience of accessing primary care, including NHS health checks. This work has been funded by the NHS Sussex Health Inequalities Grants

Programme, aiming to increase understanding of any barriers to accessing primary care.

Compass Arts are leading the engagement activities. So far, we have engaged 12 men in face-to-face discussion groups in the Eastbourne area, with another seven men contributing by alternative methods. We intend to expand the engagement to groups of men across East Sussex in the autumn. The initial work has highlighted the value of storytelling in exploring access to healthcare, including challenging previous experiences that shape men's expectations and feelings about attending healthcare appointments.

GP visits

This quarter we launched a new project working with GP practices to understand patient experiences. The project includes visiting practices to complete an accessibility audit, and speaking to staff, patients and Patient Participation Groups (PPGs). We are also undertaking mystery shopping of websites and phone messages to capture the patient experience of a range of access methods.

Through these activities we hope to identify where things are working well and where improvements could be made to improve patients' experiences. We conducted two visits to GP practices in June and the reports from these will be shared shortly. We will be running this project until the end of 2026 and will be engaging more practices to take part throughout the year.



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, which included:

- Visiting 19 pharmacies across Eastbourne, talking to staff about prescription prepayment certificates (see page 3).
- Visiting two GP surgeries to complete an accessibility audit and speak to staff and patients about their experiences (see page 7).

Volunteers also attended training on equality, diversity and inclusion, led by a Healthwatch volunteer, and took part in a volunteer meeting and an in-person celebration of Volunteers' Week at Herstmonceux Castle.

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
 0333 101 4007
 enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

The East Sussex Picture

Local government elections

Elections for East Sussex County Council took place on 7th May 2026, with Reform UK becoming the largest party and forming an administration. The election saw a high turnover in councillors, with many serving for the first time. This may mean changes are likely in the membership of the committees that oversee health and social care, including the [Health and Wellbeing Board](#) and [Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#).

NHS Modernisation Bill 2026

The [NHS Modernisation Bill](#), introduced on 13 May 2026, proposes changes including the abolition of NHS England (NHSE), reconfiguring duties of integrated care boards (e.g. NHS Surrey and Sussex), and creation of a single patient record. The Bill also proposes abolishing Healthwatch and moving patient voice functions to local authorities for social care and integrated care boards for health, potentially removing independent scrutiny of services.

Sussex Surgical Centre formally opened

The Sussex Surgical Centre at Eastbourne District General Hospital was formally opened on Wednesday 3 June 2026 by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester. The £40 million purpose-built elective surgery unit was recently visited by Healthwatch East Sussex and we reviewed the environment and gathered feedback from patients. Our report will be published shortly.

Crowborough Birthing Centre

In June, the NHS announced that intrapartum (birth) services would not restart at Crowborough Birthing Centre following a temporary pause. The longer-term future of these services will now be considered as part of a wider programme of work across Surrey and Sussex exploring how all maternity services are delivered.

Local government reform

A second government consultation ran this quarter offering local people a say on whether parts of East Sussex should transfer to an expanded Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC). On the 16th July 2026, it was announced that from April 2028 Brighton & Hove City Council would incorporate East Saltdean, Peacehaven and Telscombe, with the rest of East Sussex forming a single unitary council.

Coming up next

Visits to Eastbourne District General Hospital (EDGH): We are collaborating with East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) to co-design Healthwatch visits to Eastbourne DGH later in 2026, to observe basic care and engage with patients.

Joint Community Rehabilitation: We will be working with East Sussex County Council to gather feedback on people's experience of Joint Community Rehabilitation (JCR) services.

PLACE: Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE) will be taking place from September, with volunteers visiting hospitals across East Sussex to look at non-clinical aspects of healthcare settings, including aspects such as building maintenance, cleanliness and the food service.

To find out more about 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

Despite ongoing changes across health and care systems both locally and nationally, Healthwatch East Sussex has successfully maintained delivery of its statutory role in ensuring that people's experiences and concerns inform service review and planning. The team and volunteers have contributed to research, scrutiny and improvement recommendations in a broad range of areas including men's mental health, the use of nicotine pouches and the new Sussex Surgical Centre.

As host of Healthwatch East Sussex, ESCV has continued to plan for the future of patient voice, against a backdrop of national reform, local system change, and financial uncertainty. Staff, volunteers and the board have maintained a steadfast focus on sustaining delivery alongside undertaking vital transition planning. Our collaborative approach is built on continuing partnership working with the NHS, local authority and voluntary sector across Sussex.

As the new Chief Executive of East Sussex Community Voice, I am grateful for the commitment and support of staff, volunteers, board members and cross-sector partners. I am confident that we can adapt and evolve through change.

Recent Publications

[Healthwatch East Sussex Annual Report 2025-26: Speaking up for better care](#)

[HWiS Poll Results May 2026: Experiences of accessing Musculoskeletal \(MSK\) services in Sussex](#)

[May 2026: You said, we did](#)

[Children and Young People’s views and experiences of Nicotine Pouches](#)

[Residents Experiences of Emergency and Temporary Accommodation in Hastings](#)

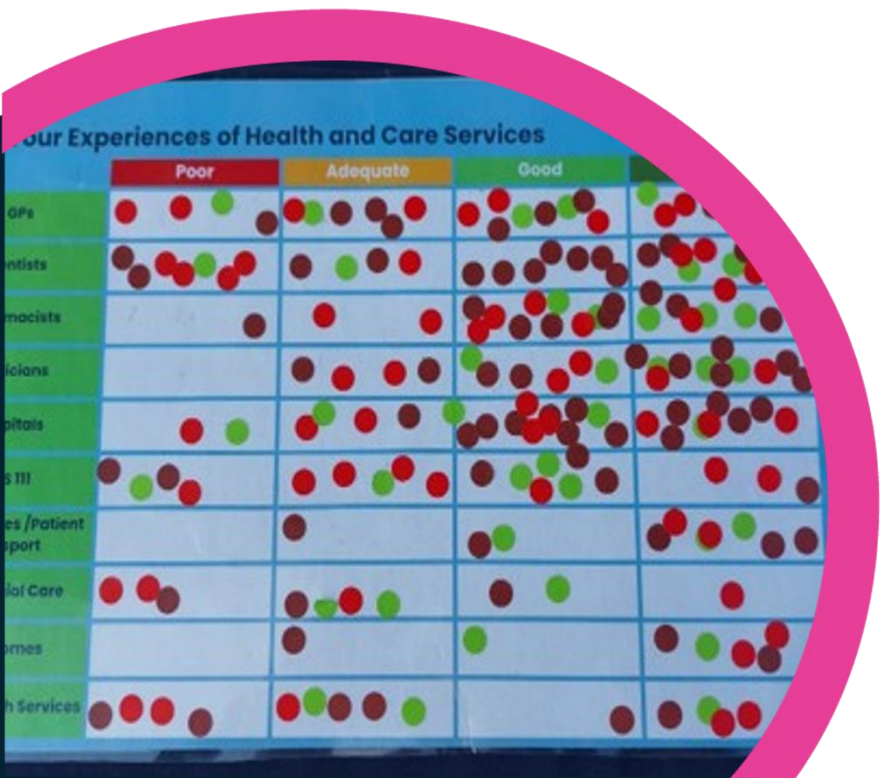
[Listening Tour Area Report: Eastbourne](#)

[April 2026: You said, we did](#)

[Healthwatch East Sussex Quarter 4 Report – January to March 2026](#)

[March 2026: You Said, We did](#)

[HWiS Poll Results March 2026: Weight Loss Injections](#)



A thick, bright pink curved line that starts from the left edge of the page, curves upwards and to the right, and then curves downwards towards the right edge.

Healthwatch East Sussex
Unit 31
The Old Printworks
1 Commercial Road
Eastbourne
BN21 3XQ

 www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

 0333 101 4007

 enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

 [Facebook.com/HealthwatchESussex](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchESussex)

 [Healthwatcheastsussex](https://www.instagram.com/Healthwatcheastsussex)

 [healthwatcheastsussex](https://www.linkedin.com/company/healthwatcheastsussex)