



Rye Listening Tour: One Year On

healthwatch
East Sussex

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Introduction

Healthwatch East Sussex are the local independent watchdog for health and social care services. We gather feedback from residents, both good and bad, and make recommendations to improve services.

Each year we undertake a Listening Tour focusing on one area of East Sussex to engage with local people and understand our communities in more detail.

Our Listening Tours are just the start of the process, they enable us to build relationships, gather insight and understand the experiences of local people.

This report provides an update on the activity that has taken place since our Rye Listening Tour in 2023, what we are doing now and what is coming next.

The Rye Listening Tour

Throughout September 2023 we conducted two weeks of engagement activities to meet people where they are and capture their experiences of local health and care.

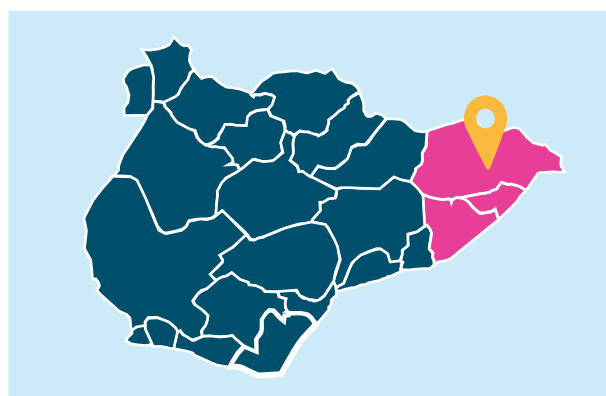
We used a survey, focus groups, 1-2-1 conversations and pop-up stands, as well as setting up a base at Tilling Green Community Centre.

As part of our activity, we also conducted Enter and Views* at 19 care homes and carried out a mystery shop of 6 GP surgery websites in and around Rye.

Our aims:

- Raise the profile of Healthwatch amongst the public (especially diverse communities), community groups and service providers.
- Use the feedback gained to understand local issues and seek positive developments in health and care services.
- Gain a wide range of feedback from all parts of society to relay to the local health and care system and Healthwatch England.
- Target specific groups in this area to discover their barriers to health and care.

More details on the Rye Listening Tour and what we heard can be found in the report pack on the [HWES website](#).



*Healthwatch have a legal power to visit health and social care services and see them in action. This power to *Enter and View* services offers a way for Healthwatch to meet some of our statutory functions and allows us to identify what is working well with services and where they could be improved.

Rye Listening Tour one year on

What we have done

Following the Rye Listening Tour in 2023 we collated and analysed what you told us about your experiences and pulled everything together into 5 reports including;

- [Rye Listening Tour 2023 – Headline Report](#)
- [Rye Listening Tour Engagement Report](#)
- [Rye Enter and View – Care Home in Rye and Rural Rother Report](#)
- [Rye Listening Tour Easy Read](#)
- [Rye GP Mystery Shop Report](#)

These reports summarise what you told us, as well as setting out our conclusions and recommendations for Healthwatch, health and care services and other local partners, supporting positive change.

In the 12 months since the tour took place, we have shared these reports, followed up on recommendations and designed and carried out projects that act on what we heard.

Details on some of these projects are outlined in the following case studies.

Sharing what you told us

We have worked to ensure that what you told us about living in Rye and the surrounding villages and your experiences of local health and care have been shared with a range of partners and decision makers.

To date we have shared our reports, findings and recommendations with the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and local health and care commissioners and stakeholders including:

- NHS Sussex
- East Sussex County Council, Adult Social Care and Health
- VCSE partners
- Local healthcare providers
- Care home providers
- Members of the public

Case Study: Primary care

During the tour we heard that access to primary care was a significant issue for residents in the area.

We heard about services that had previously provided outreach across community settings having been changed or removed. Through our focus groups and community group visits we heard from people living in areas outside of Rye such as Camber and Icklesham who were feeling the impact following the removal of previously available health services. We also heard from people who had experienced the removal of satellite GP services who were now facing difficulties in arranging transport to further locations, leaving them feeling isolated from the wider health and care system.

To address some of these issues we met with the clinical director of Rural Rother PCN to explore how access to healthcare could be improved locally. We discussed the possibility of introducing an outreach model, taking healthcare to where people are rather than requiring them to travel. We will follow up on this activity.

In addition, we spoke directly to the Head of Primary Care for East Sussex and East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust to share suggestions. We will continue to support healthcare providers to consider how they can remove barriers to healthcare in this part of East Sussex and more widely.

Case Study: Transport

Transport as an issue was raised across the tour. People highlighted the limited public transport in Rye and Rural Rother impacted their ability to access healthcare, employment and social connections.

We heard from people struggling with accessing patient transport to and from appointments, meaning they had to rely on private transport. In the current cost of living crisis, this presents a very real barrier to accessing healthcare.

The rurality of the area makes it more challenging to meet the needs of the community, but people we spoke to suggested that alternatives to traditional provision should be considered, such as community transport schemes.

What has happened since?

We presented our findings to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board, where our concerns about the way transport affects people's ability to access healthcare were echoed by others. To address these issues, the Adult Social Care team put us in touch with the right people to respond to the recommendations we'd made.

We met with transport colleagues from East Sussex County Council to share the findings from the tour and to make sure the issues raised feed into the Local Transport Plan for 2024-2050. The plan already focused on healthy and active transport options, but we highlighted the need for the plan to consider how people get to health and care settings.

Access to healthcare should be a key priority for the Local Transport Plan. Healthwatch will continue to be involved in the development of the plan, and we will monitor transport feedback and share information with the transport team.

In addition, we connected the transport team with the Integrated Community Teams programme for NHS Sussex, ensuring transport plays a role in the development of this programme.

Next steps:

1. Transport colleagues have been added as members of the Healthwatch East Sussex Advisory Group so transport is considered in all our work.
2. We are feeding back on the Equality Impact Assessment for the Local Transport Plan to ensure access to healthcare is prioritised.
3. We will continue to work with transport colleagues as plans develop, exploring ways to ensure local people are listened to.
4. We will continue to monitor transport across the county and record relevant feedback in our issues log.

Case Study: Oral Health in Care Homes

Our Enter and View activity at various care homes in the Listening Tour area identified dentistry as being a particular issue, as many residents were unable to access health and care services or had found that visiting services had not returned following COVID-19.

As a result, we recommended that the NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board should consider how they can ensure that adequate and appropriate NHS dentistry services are provided to care homes to support oral health.

What has happened since?

We have been in discussions with the NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) about our local population's access to dentistry services, and particularly for people living in care homes.

Following the tour, we engaged with 13 care homes to gather feedback from residents and staff on the current approaches to oral health, and their views as to how this could be developed. We worked with NHS Sussex to seek the views of care home residents and managers on the proposed pilot of domiciliary dental care in Sussex.

Healthwatch volunteers undertook an Enter and View project at care homes in Wealden and Eastbourne, speaking with twenty-seven residents and eighteen care home managers and staff.

We heard that residents receive regular support with their oral health care where required. Residents have oral health care plans that are reviewed regularly, and staff receive at least some training on oral health care.

Access to dentistry was described as easy by residents who saw a private dentist. However, there are very long waiting times for the NHS Special Care Dental Service in Eastbourne and in Uckfield. Access to dentistry for residents in care homes appears dependent on a person's ability to pay. At least some residents were experiencing dental issues that were affecting their health and wellbeing, including difficulties with eating and communication.

Residents, care home managers and senior staff all supported the concept of dental therapists visiting care homes, informed by the experience of being attached to a GP practice for consistent health care.

Next steps:

Our 'enter and view' report has been shared with partners in NHS Sussex, NHS England and the President of the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy.

We will publish the report following a meeting with partners and continue to support the domiciliary dental care pilot in Sussex to address the inequality of access between private and NHS patient's resident in care homes.

Rye Listening Tour one year on What else is coming up

Modern General Practice project

Leading on from the tour's 'mystery shop' at 6 GP practices, we are developing a project to explore the implementation of 'Modern General Practice' in primary care which is aimed at broadening access, to understand what is currently being offered, how this varies across East Sussex and how it could improve access for patients.

Sharing best practice

As part of our Enter and View activity in care homes in Rye and the surrounding villages we identified best practice liaison and relationships between care homes and their GPs. We will continue to work with Rural Rother PCN and NHS Sussex to share this good practice and explore how it can be replicated.

Health and care network event

We will host a health and care network event in autumn 2024 to bring key stakeholders back together. Building on relationships developed during the tour, we will look at next steps and how we can actively improve health and care in the area.

Continue building on and sharing what we heard and learnt

Our Listening Tours are just the starting point for our activity in the area. Moving forward we will continue to share our findings and will build on what we heard by continuing to engage with communities in Rye and Rural Rother.



The future of the Listening Tour

We have been delivering Healthwatch Listening Tours since 2017, visiting areas across East Sussex to capture people's views and experiences of health and care.

This year (2024) we are putting all that we have learnt through our 6 previous tours and other engagement activities and refreshing our Listening Tour approach to reach more of the county more regularly.

Moving forward we will employ our Listening Tour methods in areas across the county on a rolling basis, **visiting multiple areas in a year**.

We will **continue to use a variety of activities** to hear people's experiences of accessing and using health and care services. Through individual surveys, discussion groups, and listening events, we will capture views from a range of communities.

We will be delivering shorter place-based reports, with one annual Listening Tour Summary.

And as always, we will use what we hear to make recommendations to local health and care services, commissioners and decision makers to support positive changes to local services.



Acknowledgements

Our Listening Tour resulted in a large amount of feedback from communities across Rye and the surrounding area thanks to the support of:

- Healthwatch East Sussex Volunteers
- Tilling Green Community Centre
- NHS Sussex Public Involvement Team
- East Sussex Adult Social Care
- Rye Festival of the Sea and Land
- Little Gate Farm
- Camber Memorial Hall Tea and Cake Drop-in
- Fairlight Drop-in Social Club
- Peasmarsh Lunch Club
- Rye Market
- St Bartholomew's Court Care Home
- Rye Train Station
- Winchelsea Co-Op
- Rye Harbour Nature Reserve
- Ambition Links
- East Sussex Hearing
- Five Villages Home Association
- Health in Mind
- Rye Primary Care Network
- Rye and Winchelsea Memorial Hospital
- Rother Voluntary Action
- Sussex Outreach Support
- The Advocacy People
- Local Patient Participation Group (PPG) members



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