

Together



**we're making health
and social care better**

Healthwatch Croydon
Annual Report 2022-23



About us

Healthwatch Croydon is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS and social care 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

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

- **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.

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"In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

Meet our team and board

Healthwatch Croydon is delivered by four members of staff and supported by a local leadership board comprised of Croydon residents and others with a commitment to the borough.

Our team



(Left to right in photograph)

Jeet Sandhu, Communications Lead
Gordon Kay, Healthwatch Croydon Manager
Robyn Bone, Volunteer and Partnerships Lead
Yinka Faponnle, Engagement Lead

Our local leadership board

Edwina Morris (Chair)
Martin Faiers
Olusina Adeniyi
Pat Knight
Michael Lawal (resigned 18 January 2023)
Anantha Ramaswamy

healthwatch
Croydon

Healthwatch Croydon and Help & Care

Help & Care held the contract for Healthwatch service for Croydon, which is commissioned by Croydon Council. Local leadership board members have been selected through an open recruitment process and are Croydon residents or those with a commitment to the borough. They bring a wide experience and knowledge of health and care services. Emma Leatherbarrow as Director of Partnerships at Help & Care was a member of the board until July 2022. Her successor, Kathryn Loughnan, joined the board in September 2022. Gordon Kay is the operational manager and also attends the board.

help&care

Message from our Chair

Like many organisations, Healthwatch Croydon found 2022/23 to be a year of transition from living a relatively isolated existence communicating mainly online due to the continuing threat of contracting Covid, to reconnecting in person with old friends and colleagues and meeting new people.

During the year we welcomed the opportunity to restart our face-to-face outreach sessions and focus groups, to actually meet local residents (especially those people who are seldom listened to) to find out about their experience of local health and care services, and to let local leaders know which services people thought well of and which needed to improve.

However, working through Covid lockdowns had shown us that we could still communicate with many Croydon residents through our website and social media, and so during the year we launched several online surveys, such as for the Urgent and Emergency Care Transformation project (page 16) and the Young



E. Morris

Edwina Morris
Healthwatch Croydon
Chair

People's Mental Health survey (page 21), and online focus groups including meeting with representatives from the Tamil community who did not speak English (page 16) and people with experience of using the London Ambulance Service (page 20).

Working in Croydon, which benefits from a diverse population, we won funding to host a Healthwatch England Inclusion Ambassador and during 2022 we welcomed Sally Andrews to the team who assessed diversity within our organisation and the wider Croydon community and then shared her insight with another Healthwatch in the East of England to help them with their diversity planning. (page 12).



Working in Croydon, which benefits from a diverse population, we won funding to host a Healthwatch England Inclusion Ambassador initiative and during 2022 we welcomed Sally Andrews to the team.

Message from our Chair

We also continued to work with our volunteers, who contributed a great deal to our work during the year (as described in pages 29–30), such as their diligent work in analysing GP websites (see page 17). Of course, the effort put in to undertake all this work would be wasted if it failed to influence local health and care leaders in understanding the benefit of listening to the views of people who use their services, and in making the improvements that have been identified as required through local people's experience and opinions.

When deciding which project areas to focus on, our local leadership board (LLB) and staff team look into who would be interested in the subsequent report and how to influence local decision makers. We do this partly through our published reports and partly through attendance at key health and social care meetings, where we can raise these issues and speak directly to the decision makers. Our contribution to the development of a new dementia Strategy (page 18) and analysis of patients' experience of the MyCare patient portal (page 19) are examples of this.

During 2022/23 we also worked closely with the other local Healthwatch organisations in SW London and the SWL Integrated Care System (ICS) to agree how Healthwatch can meaningfully participate in decision making at the SW London level. This resulted in the ICS funding an additional post to represent Healthwatch and report to the ICS on the key issues identified by patients across South West London (page 22).

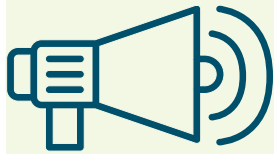
We also said goodbye to a number of people during the year. In June Emma Leatherbarrow (Help and Care Director of Partnerships) left, with her successor Kathryn Loughnan joining in September. Michael Lawal, one of our LLB members, resigned in January 2023, and our volunteer lead, Robyn Bone left in March to take up another post in the voluntary sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for their hard work and commitment to Healthwatch Croydon, and similarly to thank all the staff and volunteers who continue to help us to represent local people's views to those with responsibility for improving local services.



Our year in review

Reaching out



860 people

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

75 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost of living crisis.

Making a difference to care

We shared **8 reports** about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.



Our most popular report was **Urgent and Emergency Care** which presented the customer journey and experiences of over 1000 Croydon residents and helped decision-makers allocate new GP Hubs and support further transformation.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have **20** outstanding volunteers who gave up **953 hours equal to 25.7 full days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received **£149,411**

This was 1.5% less than the previous year

Up until 31 March 2023, we employed

4 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring



We continued discussions and undertook further analysis of our 1000 responses to our urgent and emergency care survey to inform plans (see 15).



We hosted a year-long Healthwatch England Diversity Ambassadorship to take learning from Croydon to others (see page 12).

Summer



We assessed over 45 GP websites across 25 aspects including information, ease and accessibility to support GP transformation work (see page 17).



We shared school pupils' views on mental health and services with commissioners and later found a second school for a comparative study (see page 21).

Autumn



Shared insight from people with dementia, their carers, friends and family to support development of the new Croydon dementia strategy (see page 18).



We interviewed 15 Pakistani and Bangladeshi residents about their views on COVID and flu vaccines for NHS England (see page 25).

Winter




Combined insight from survey, outreach and a focus group on views about the London Ambulance Service to inform their new strategy (see page 20).



Gained insight from 230 from Croydon University Hospital outpatients about an online patient portal to improve awareness and access (see page 19).


What our stakeholders say

While independent of all health and social care services, we work closely with our stakeholders to provide insight that can impact change based on what you tell us as Croydon residents. Here are some comments from stakeholders:




Healthwatch Croydon have been working really hard alongside the Local Dental Committees this year in the face of an ever more challenging dental landscape. A big thank you to Gordon at Healthwatch Croydon and the other South West London Healthwatch for all the support in pushing the needs of patients forwards in trying to help reduce dental access issues and highlighting the issues currently facing patients within South West London, especially amongst children. The oral health of the community feeds into other systemic conditions and Healthwatch have been great at recognising this. They see the value in NHS dental services and understand the benefits to patients and also the wider NHS network. We truly value their support and hope we can continue to work together to ensure patient needs remain at the forefront and ultimately to improve dental health outcomes for all.

Ritesh Gajree, Director South West London Local Dental Committee Croydon



One of my priorities is that the people of Croydon lead healthier and independent lives for longer. We need to fulfil all our statutory responsibilities and ensure that our residents are supported; and those at risk of abuse or neglect are safe. The work that Healthwatch Croydon does is key to this, bringing the voices and experiences of our residents who access health and care in Croydon to the forefront of our operational, transformational and commissioning work. Their Chair, is also a key member of my Adult Social Care and Health Improvement Board.

The elected Mayor of Croydon, Mayor Perry, pledged that Croydon would gain Dementia Friendly status, which the Croydon Dementia Action Alliance has recently achieved. Key to this is the new Dementia Strategy; for which Healthwatch Croydon delivered a review of residents' experience on the dementia services pathways. As an integrated health and care system one of our current focuses is ensuring that people are safely and swiftly discharged from hospital. Healthwatch Croydon are creating an insight report that will be invaluable to the development of this pathway. I look forward to seeing the results once finalised and continuing the strong working relationship with Healthwatch Croydon.



Annette McPartland, Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, Croydon Council

What our stakeholders say



"The research undertaken by the staff and trained volunteers of Healthwatch Croydon has given the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee a better understanding of the patient experience of health services in Croydon. Their reports are essential reading for anyone interested in local health services and invaluable for the Sub-Committee in regards to its role in holding local health partners to account."

Sean Fitzsimons, Chair of Croydon Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee 2019-23



"As a critical friend Healthwatch Croydon are an essential partner helping be a voice of our patients and the people in our care. Throughout the year, we have welcomed the feedback from Healthwatch Croydon surveying our patients on the new MyCare online portal, which aims to give people greater control of their care. They have also gathered insight from 1,000 people who have used our urgent and emergency care to help shape our services, and helped voice the opinions, views and wants of patients whose first language is not English as we strive to make our care is more accessible to all. We look forward to continuing our work with Healthwatch in the year ahead to guide the decision we make and make sure our patients and local community are heard."

Matthew Kershaw, Croydon Health Services NHS Trust Chief Executive and Place Based Leader for Health



10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

How have we made care better, together?

Black and Minority Ethnic Wellbeing (2019)



Our insight presented views about wellbeing from these communities to support the development of a dedicated centre. This report is still being used to plan and develop services for this community.

Young People's Mental Health (2020)



Working with Croydon College T-level students, we coproduced a report which they designed, analysed and presented to stakeholders on. Future work in this area developed as a result of these findings as presented on p.21.

NHS dentistry (2021)



Working with the local dental committee we raised the profile of issues of patient access and how commissioning affects supply. Conversations with with South West London NHS Integrated Care Board commissioners are continuing as a result.



GP Registration (2019)

Our insight profiled good practice of GPs registration from three surgeries which the other surgeries could aspire to achieve and built strong relationships between GPs and Healthwatch for future working.



Care Homes and COVID (2021)

In response to COVID we conducted insight into the impact on care homes gaining views from patients, friends and family and staff. The findings helped shaped Croydon Council's strategy.

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/





Sally Andrews

Healthcare Hero

Introducing Sally Andrews, the Healthwatch Hero and Healthwatch England Inclusion Ambassador hosted by Healthwatch Croydon. Throughout the Inclusion Ambassadors project, Sally played a crucial role in promoting diversity, inclusion, and engagement within the local Healthwatch network. As a dedicated volunteer, she brought her invaluable insights and experiences to the table, ensuring that people from protected and inclusion health groups had a voice in shaping the future of health and social care services.

Sally's impact was truly transformative. She actively supported three Healthwatch teams in reviewing their inclusion practices, focusing on inclusive volunteering. Through her guidance, Healthwatch Croydon successfully recruited individuals from diverse backgrounds, including young volunteers and individuals facing health inequalities. The result was a volunteer team and board that better reflected the population they served, leading to more inclusive decision-making processes and a broader range of voices being heard.

In April 2022, Healthwatch Croydon worked alongside four other healthwatch's to recruit inclusion ambassadors to improve diversity and inclusion within the healthwatch network. This video details the experience of the inclusion ambassadors.



Scan the QR code to watch the video>>>

After the completion of the pilot project, Sally and her fellow Inclusion Ambassadors participated in a video where they shared their experiences and insights gained throughout the initiative. This video became a testament to the positive outcomes achieved by the project, showcasing the significant strides made in increasing diversity and inclusion within the Healthwatch network.

Sally Andrews exemplifies the spirit of a Healthwatch Hero and Inclusion Ambassador, championing the cause of inclusivity and making a lasting impact on the community. Her dedication and passion have set the stage for future endeavors, inspiring others to follow in her footsteps and continue the journey toward a more diverse and inclusive healthcare system.



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.

Informing Urgent and Emergency Care Transformation

Urgent and emergency care service planning is being influenced by patient insight due to feedback from Healthwatch Croydon, the local champion for health and social care.

In 2021, we received responses from over 1,000 Croydon residents on their experiences of Croydon University's Accident and Emergency Department, as well as examining the patient journey. Healthwatch asked questions around which services patients had accessed prior to A&E, questions around their understanding of various terms across primary and secondary care as well as their experiences of other healthcare touch points such as the 111 service, GP Hubs and Ambulances to name a few.

Findings

Our findings achieved widespread media attention as a result of responses received:

- Many patients did use the NHS's 111 service and or called their GP as their first choice and were also able to access the right service more quickly compared to those who had accessed the GP Hubs or pharmacy services.
- They found a higher proportion of those using urgent care services were those with certain sets of illnesses.
- Overall satisfaction was rated at 62% but this rating varied when our data was segmented into ages, gender, ethnicity and disabilities from between 50% and 75% respectively.

What difference will this make?

- This insight has been presented at the Urgent and Emergency Care Transformation Board set up to redesign the pathways in line with patient demand and expectations.
- A focus on making NHS111 a reliable first step which allows booking to other services has been influenced in recommissioning of this service.
- Further developments are being put together by the Croydon Urgent Care Alliance to transform all aspects of the service and Healthwatch has had continued discussions with those designing the services.

"The Croydon Urgent Care team have found the survey and subsequent analysis very useful in understanding patients' experiences and pathways in the Croydon Urgent Care system. We learnt that patients who contacted their GP or 111 had a lower number of touchpoints before they were treated."

Paul Cooper, from Urgent & Emergency Care at NHS South West London Integrated Care Board

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/



Improving access for those who do not speak English

NHS England implemented the Accessible Information standard in 2016 to ensure people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss could communicate effectively with providers.

Healthwatch Croydon received funding from Healthwatch England in October 2022. We carried out structured interviews – all through an interpreter – with French African, Latin Spanish, and Ukrainian speakers and held a focus group with a Tamil community. We also interviewed some professionals who work across a range of healthcare settings as well as an interpreter.

Our local intelligence was fed back to Healthwatch England who produced this evidence from local Healthwatch findings Briefing (healthwatch.co.uk).

Findings

Our findings are as following :



- French African patients did not understand the doctor, even with the interpreter.
- Latin Spanish patients had difficulties following up a medical and they feel impotent, as they cannot communicate properly.
- GP receptionists and GP at Croydon surgery said Google translate is used for booking, unless staff happens to speak relevant second language.

What difference will this make?

This contributed to Healthwatch England's wider report Healthwatch England Lost for Words of which Croydon residents shown below are cited. We now share this with local stakeholders so they can consider their current services and how they might be improved for those who do not speak English easily.



"Interpreting services are already there and are very good for the people like me who don't speak English. Yes, usually they ask me if I need an interpreter, but I make an effort so that I can do this by myself through my dictionary. So, I use my dictionary."

Comment from respondent

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/



Supporting better GP websites

Healthwatch Croydon embarked on a mission to explore and evaluate the digital landscape of GP websites in Croydon. Our goal was to ensure that every resident of our community can access healthcare services seamlessly and enjoy a positive patient experience. This report shares our findings, recommendations, and valuable insights gathered from patients, GPs, and the community.

Findings

- **Embracing Safe Surgeries:** We urge all GP practices in Croydon to become safe surgeries, minimising health barriers for vulnerable groups, including asylum seekers, refugees, and the homeless population.
- **Streamlined Registration:** We recommend the use of the standardized GSI registration form across GP practices to ensure clarity and consistency, simplifying the registration process for all patients.
- **Emphasising Interpreting Services:** It is crucial to promote the availability of interpreting services for non-English speakers, facilitating effective communication and fostering understanding in healthcare interactions.
- **Collaborative Approach to PPGs:** We encourage GP practices to actively engage with their PPGs or seek collaboration with community organisations to ensure the patient voice is heard in shaping services. This includes reviewing complaints processes and refining the tone and wording to create a constructive and supportive environment.



What difference will this make?

- Facilitating access to healthcare services through improved website accessibility.
- Empowering individuals by advocating for inclusive registration processes.
- Enhancing patient experience by providing recommendations for user-friendly websites.
- Driving positive change through collaboration with GPs.
- Championing accessibility, empowerment, and collaboration for better healthcare outcomes.

“We are currently in the process of changing our website provider and have just received a demo of the new site. Our staff will go through your list of requirements very carefully to make sure we meet all requirements before the new site goes live. Thank you for your input.”

London Road, Medical Practice

You can read all these reports and more at
www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/



Providing insight for a new dementia strategy

In May 2022, Healthwatch Croydon partnered with the Alzheimer's Society to conduct an insightful investigation into the utilisation of dementia pathway services. The aim was to gather valuable input to shape Croydon's new dementia strategy. Through three online surveys, we sought feedback from individuals diagnosed with dementia, their caregivers, and their friends and family. By aligning the questions, we were able to compare experiences across different groups. While the Alzheimer's Society facilitated survey recruitment, Healthwatch Croydon took responsibility for data analysis and presentation.

Findings



The survey responses provided a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of the dementia pathway, including diagnosis, information and support, GP follow-up appointments. Key findings included the variability in diagnosis times, the need for better information on legal and financial entitlements, improved communication on support services, and the importance of greater awareness of GP follow-up appointments. Issues around diagnosis, advanced care planning, reassessment of dementia and care needs, and discussions of support and care needs for carers also surfaced.

What difference will this make?

In order to create a dementia-friendly environment, greater understanding, education, and training are essential. Improved quality of care, effective communication during hospitalisation, and adequate support during transitions are crucial for individuals with dementia. Additionally, provisions should be made for appropriate housing options that prioritise independence and choice, while care homes should focus on person-centred care and staff training. Overall, our project aimed to gather valuable insights from those directly affected by dementia and their support networks. By highlighting the challenges and proposing recommendations, we strive to contribute to the development of an inclusive and supportive dementia strategy for Croydon.

Analysed and presented data to the Croydon Dementia Action Alliance (CDAA) and the Dementia and CDAA Steering Group. As a result, this has helped define key aspects of the Croydon Dementia Strategy due to be published later this year.



“They just told me it's dementia. They didn't tell me any more than this. I had a form to fill in an assessment form from Croydon Council. I had to do some research myself on some cost issues.”

Person affected by dementia

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/



Assessing patient experience of MyCare patient portal

Croydon Health Services NHS Trust Enhances MyCare Online patient Access Based on Patient Feedback.

In February 2023 a face-to-face engagement was held with 230 participants to gather their views on the MyCare portal. The survey revealed valuable insights into patient user experience and identified barriers that hinder the use of the online portal.

Based on the collected data, Croydon Health Services NHS Trust is committed to improving the My Care Online Patient Access service to address patient concerns and enhance user satisfaction. The survey focused on outpatients from Trauma and Orthopaedics, Gynaecology, Cardiology, and the Main Outpatients departments at Croydon University Hospital.

Findings



- Only 27% (63 patients) of the surveyed participants were aware of MyCare Online Patient Access. 55% (17 patients) found MyCare extremely useful, and 32% (10 patients) found it very useful.
- Reasons for not using MyCare included already having alternative apps with similar functionality, existing access to other portals, and concerns about necessity. Some patients felt their devices were too old, while others preferred the current text-based system.
- Privacy concerns, perceived complexity, and issues with software were also mentioned as barriers.

What difference will this make?

We suggested to create more awareness, provide a user-friendly guide and test the service quality. As a result, Croydon Health Services NHS has already made improvements to the service such as linking it to the NHS app and are planning to communicate the MyCare service offering with Croydon patients in a more effective manner.



"I go to several hospital that has several set up. And do the same thing I am on several apps i.e., NHS app ,MY app, Dot post, patients no best app."

Comment from Respondent

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/



Providing insight for London Ambulance Service's strategy

In November 2022, the London Ambulance Service (LAS) commissioned Healthwatch Croydon to undertake patient insight in Croydon.

We ran one in-person focus group on 17 January 2023 where four people shared their views over two hours. We also ran a survey through December 2022 and January 2023 to help gain insight to answer questions and gained 26 responses. In response to the questions asked by LAS, we also drew from other insight we had already gathered.

Many service users feel that LAS has the resources to do what it needs to do. Service users understand that some of the challenges are due to demand, and issues with transferring patients into hospital caused by discharge challenges at other locations.

Findings:



- Caring staff were mentioned frequently with many service users commending a great service and excellent patient care.
- It was noted that LAS staff dealt well with a range of ages from young to old, respecting patient wishes.
- For many service users, LAS has a good reputation and shows professionalism, and is well-loved and respected by patients.

What difference will this make?

LAS is providing a good service to service users and is highly regarded. However, there are a number of challenges in delivering services, as a first-response provider. Reliance on many other factors to succeed such as patient knowledge and perception as well as pressures from other parts of the urgent and emergency care pathway. This insight along with that from other London Healthwatch, is being analysed for a final strategy to be published later this year.



One service user said that the ambulances had been great in responding within minutes to their sick baby. Others also recognised their quick response in dealing with an unexpected additional patient who approached the vehicle needing emergency assistance due to a stabbing.

Comment , from a service user

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/



Raising issues about young peoples' mental health

The Young People Mental Health project aimed to gather insights and understand the mental health experiences of young individuals in Croydon. The project was conducted through online surveys in two different schools within the area. The first survey took place between March and May 2022, with 257 responses collected. The second survey occurred in January 2023, involving 220 responses from a different school in the south of Croydon.

Findings:

- The project recognised the significance of signposting and found that there is a need for more targeted information about mental health support specifically tailored to young people in Croydon. The results indicated that students are not fully aware of the available professional mental health services, often seeking help through the school or relying on their friends and family. To address this, the project recommended the implementation of informative workshops and the creation of safe spaces where students can openly express their feelings and reduce the stigma associated with mental health.
- The role of friends and family as a significant source of support. The project recommended exploring ways to directly support friends and family members or establish collaborative efforts with schools to ensure adequate assistance is provided. Furthermore, the project found that young people showed a preference for face-to-face interactions when seeking support, as opposed to online sources like Kooth. This insight underscores the importance of establishing trustworthy relationships and fostering a sense of trust between young individuals and their support networks.



What difference will this make?

Highlighted the importance of stress management tools and resources, such as mindfulness practices and online materials, to help young people effectively cope with academic pressures and coursework-related stress. This has been presented to the Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Partnership Board who lead in developing new services.



"It was hard to speak up about certain issues. because it is hard to tell people how u actually feel and not lie to make them think u r ok "

"Because school was not going well. They put a lot of pressure on us for tests and i felt like i wasn't going to do well. Some of my friends made me feel like this as well."

School pupils

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/



Ensuring communities are heard in regional decisions

Collaboration between SW London Healthwatch

This year we strengthened our collaboration between South West London Healthwatch (Croydon, Merton, Sutton, Richmond, Kingston and Wandsworth) to make sure communities across South West London are heard in the planning and running of services at Integrated Care System (ICS level). In late 2022, we recruited an Executive Officer and established a Joint Working Group to facilitate and support greater collaboration between us and with the new South West London ICS. This wouldn't have been possible without funding from the ICS and our joint efforts to make sure the arrangements maintain our independence.

What difference has this made?

Local people who shared their experiences with us directly influenced the ambitions of the ICS because over 100 reports across the six boroughs informed the Integrated Care Strategy and the Joint Forward Plan. Healthwatch Croydon was mentioned 51 times in the insight report, from our report 'Croydon residents' experiences of Living with Long COVID to 'Croydon residents' experiences of accessing and using NHS dental services in 2021' and 'Impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of Croydon residents'.

As the system develops actions to take, we continue to ensure what you've told us is considered. In May 2023 we contributed to a conference that planned actions to tackle the priorities in the strategies.

We provide insights to inform strategies. We convened local dentistry committee leads and the ICS lead for dentistry to share knowledge about issues local people face and prepare for the move to local dentistry decision making. We are encouraging people to share their views [here](#).



"South West London Integrated Care System (ICS) values Healthwatch insights that are informing our health and social care priorities, ensuring services meet the needs of our diverse people and communities.

Since November 2022 we have worked in partnership with a new South West London Healthwatch Executive Officer. They attend many of our ICS meetings to ensure decisions impacting on people's lives are guided by our communities' needs, concerns, and aspirations.

We look forward to our continued partnership with our South West London Healthwatch. By working hand in hand, we ensure that the local communities and carer voice are not only heard, but genuinely valued and acted upon, making a transformative difference in the lives of local people."

Charlotte Gawne, Executive Director of Stakeholder, Partnership Engagement and Communications; Kate Wignall, Health of Patient and Public Engagement

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Asylum seekers experiences of health and wellbeing

We interviewed four people and received comment from a fifth asylum seeker in November 2022 (find out more on page 28)



It was brought to our attention at our Annual Meeting in November that asylum seekers living in a temporary hostel were experiencing negative physical and mental health due to their situation and where they also lived. We were able to respond quickly through our community connections and report to the December Croydon Health Inclusion Steering Group. As a result, we recruited an asylum seeker volunteer ambassador to keep us in contact with this community.

Health and social care leaders directly met residents

At our Annual Meeting, we asked Croydon resident what matters to them and what improvements they wanted to see as well as ask questions to key health and social care leaders.



Matthew Kershaw, Croydon's Health leader, Annette McPartland, Director of Adult Social Services at Croydon Council, Sarah Burns Head of Communities at Croydon Voluntary Action and Louise Ansari, Healthwatch England National Director discussed issues with residents and fielded questions in our half-hour long question time.

Supporting the transformation of hospital discharge

Croydon is one of six areas to be a hospital discharge Frontrunner which is looking at transforming the patient experience



We undertook telephone interviews with patients who have been discharged just a few days earlier to understand their experience of hospital discharge. This feedback will help redesign the service and ensure it is more patient-centred.



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:

- Speaking to Bangladeshi and Pakistani people about their views of the Covid and flu vaccines.
- Interviewing asylum seekers living in temporary accommodation, on low income with little access to a wider range of food and no access to employment.
- We have been raising the profile of access to NHS dentistry with the ICS as this affects those on lower incomes more.

Sharing Pakistani and Bangladeshi voices about the COVID vaccine with NHS England

Healthwatch Croydon received funding by NHS England to understand the views of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in Croydon and Camden concerning Covid and Flu vaccinations. These communities have had historical lower uptakes for both Covid and Flu vaccines as well as other vaccination programme. The aim of this research is to hear their views on vaccination, and specifically Covid and Flu and understand the approach to learning and interpreting communications about vaccine, who may influence decision making and a range of other aspects to help inform the NHS team. This will support NHS England in their work in vaccine equalities team leading vaccine deployment in specific communities. Following discussion, Healthwatch Croydon agreed to undertake 15 interviews with members of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in August and September 2022.

What we found out

Eleven of the 15 interviewed said they had taken the Covid vaccine, but only six had taken the Flu vaccine.



Most had taken the childhood vaccinations or ones needed for travel because it was expected, insisted upon, or required for travel.

Most would not want to have both Covid and Flu injections on the same day due to a risk of feeling worse.

What difference will this make?

We made recommendations directly to NHS England who acknowledged the findings and will consider this in their future roll out of vaccines in these communities.

- For more evidence for the benefits of having a yearly Flu vaccination needs to be communicated.
- Create authentic cases studies to reflect the personal situations of respondents who help define their response.
- People like to feel they make their own decisions.



I think for any vaccination it should be voluntary, obviously with full information given, well it should be voluntary, not forced upon you. I think if it's forced upon you, you're more likely to rebel against it."

Pakistani respondent

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/



Raising awareness of asylum seekers experiences in Croydon

The Asylum Seeker Project, gathered valuable insights into well-being experiences of asylum seekers in Croydon. The project focused on key areas such as access to information, access to services, ease of access, and barriers. Through interviews with four individuals, including two males and two females, the project shed light on the challenges faced by asylum seekers in Croydon.

What we found out

The findings highlighted several critical issues faced by asylum seekers. Mental health support emerged as a pressing need, as individuals expressed struggles and low emotional well-being. Limited access to appropriate housing posed significant challenges, impacting mental health and overall well-being. The eligibility criteria for job opportunities often restricted asylum seekers to limited options.



Access to services was hindered by administrative complexities, such as multiple NHS numbers assigned by different healthcare providers, causing confusion and potential delays in accessing essential care. Additionally, access to opticians and mental health services was identified as areas requiring improvement. Participants also reported difficulties in obtaining supporting letters from GPs, accessing dermatology services, and receiving necessary talking therapy. Lack of proper medical attention for underlying conditions, like liver problems, was a shared concern among asylum seekers.

What difference will this make?

Based on the findings, several recommendations and next steps have been proposed. It is crucial to conduct further research to determine the full impact of these experiences among asylum seekers. To address housing challenges, the project suggests extending the duration of stop-gap accommodation to 12-24 months. Institutionalization and the lack of freedom and choice within the system were identified as factors exacerbating mental health issues, emphasizing the need for extra support and a duty of care. Improvements in assessments, coordination between health and social care services, and the inclusion of health visiting, and link working are recommended to ensure a holistic approach to support asylum seekers' well-being. Empowering asylum seekers with knowledge of the healthcare system and addressing fears of reprisals can enhance their health advocacy. The establishment of an asylum-seeking ambassador program and the creation of a stronger evidence base were identified as crucial steps to drive positive change.



I still haven't had the services I need. I have tried to navigate, and door closed. No follow up, no action. To access another service I needed GP support, they would not support me with a letter. This was two months ago. I am trying to do something and be ok by myself. Asylum seeker, placed in Croydon

You can read all these reports and more at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/





Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost of living crisis.

Supporting a mother after her son's suicide

Our Hub team receive a number of calls from people who have had the most difficult circumstances. They give them the time to tell the story so they can best support them. It is usually a complex situation and the average call we receive is 27 minutes long.

A mother who has lost her son by suicide in December. She had visited GP in November and taken a typed letter from her son as saw GP 'as mentor' often for family issues. Caller felt GP was dismissive and she wants to complain. English is not first language of caller. She has husband and family support. Caller shared how she feels GP could have prevented this outcome and that she feels very guilty for not being able to prevent it, sometimes leading to feeling like she can't go on. Caller does not want to call Samaritans.

Caller was pleased to be told of specific support for families bereaved by suicide though. Caller says if only her GP had signposted, outcome may have been prevented. Wants information regarding complaints too, so offered to send email as follow up and to include support information within email.

Helping a husband get the care he needs for his wife

Sometimes there does not seem a place for people to go. Our Hub Team can help them with practical advice as well as where to get advocacy so their story can be heard..

Spoke with the partner on the phone who was signposted to us from the NHSE website. Partner called on behalf of his wife who suffers from mental health and bipolar. Partner said that he has spoken to a private psychiatrist regarding his wife's mental health, and they advised that she needs to be seen asap. The wife has tried to contact her local GP (Friends Medical Road Practice) regarding her mental health and feels that the GP is not taking her seriously. The wife feels like she is not getting anywhere with her GP practice and would like to know who she can speak to if she needs to write a complaint.

We suggested she might want to speak to Advocacy for all who may be able to help with her complaint. I also suggested the following organisations: - Mind - Bipolar UK - NHS website - Advocacy for all.

Partner suggested he might look for another GP for his wife as he is not happy with the current GP she attends. I made partner aware that people are finding it extremely difficult to register with another GP currently. I suggested he might want to look at the NHS website to see if there are any available.



Our volunteers

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:

- Visited hospital and other community locations to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve
- Reviewed GP website to assess accessibility.
- Analysed data.

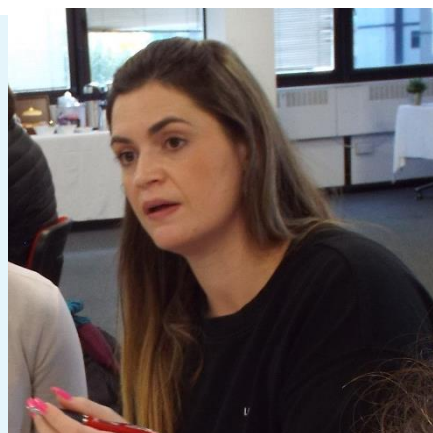
Michael says

"I have been a Healthwatch Croydon Volunteer for seven years. It has empowered me and, in turn, I can empower others. Having learned about the health service and its administration as I gather local intelligence I can signpost. It's a two way thing. I get involved with all aspects of the work, mostly online at the moment but we did get out and listen to residents".



Jade says

"Being part of the Healthwatch Croydon team has empowered me to build on what I know and learn new things. I have found a fresh enthusiasm and motivation for the future. As well as continuing with Healthwatch I am applying for other community-based roles where I can add value and really be of service."



Letting our volunteers grow

Sally Andrews started two years ago as a student on the Foundation degree in Health and Social Care at University College Croydon. She returned in her second year and as a result was the ideal candidate for the Inclusion Ambassador funding that we won from Healthwatch Croydon. Sally presented on this at our Annual Meeting.



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk



0300 012 0235



info@healthwatchcroydon.co.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 Croydon Council	£149,411	Expenditure on pay	£150,432
Additional income	£11,000	Non-pay expenditure	£30,000
		Office and management fee	£22,500
Total income	£160,411	Total expenditure	£202,932

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£3,000** funding received from NHS England Pakistani and Bangladeshi views on Covid and Flu vaccines.
- **£5,000** funding received from the London Ambulance Service to gain views to inform their strategy.
- **£3,000** funding received from Healthwatch Sutton on behalf of the South West London Integrated Care Board to cover additional work in this area.

Next steps

The Healthwatch Croydon service has been recommissioned following an open commissioning process led by the Croydon Council Procurement Team. As of 1 July 2023, the service will be hosted by Public Voice.

Team members have agreed to transfer to Public Voice and some board members have also decided to work with the new organisation. They all will begin the process on defining a new plan for 2023-24. This will be published on our website later in the summer of 2023.

Top three priorities for 2023-24

These will be confirmed following a planning process as outlined above.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Croydon, 24 George Street, Croydon CR0 1PB

Contract holder as of 31 March 2023: Help and Care, A49, Aerodrome Studios, Airfield Way, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 3TS

Healthwatch Croydon is commissioned by Croydon Council.

Healthwatch Croydon 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 Croydon board consists of six members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local communities. Through 2022/23 the board met 11 times and made decisions on approving every piece of work we undertook that year based on using a matrix of questions to ensure relevancy and impact. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We look at the comments we receive from general outreach and calls to our Healthwatch Croydon Hub.

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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended a range of virtual meetings of community groups and fora, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media, as well as some outreach sessions when it was safe to do so. We also ran a 'What matters to you?' and 'What could be improved?' session within our Annual Meeting which will help define themes for the year ahead.

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, for example, speaking to those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities about their views towards vaccines and in particular the COVID and flu vaccines.

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 and promote and share it across the community.

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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us. In our local authority area for example we take information to Croydon Council, Croydon Health and Wellbeing Board, Croydon Health and Care Board, and Croydon's Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee. We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in South West London ICS (see page 22 for more detail). We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made no Enter and View visits but were able to monitor the quality of care homes through participation in the Croydon Safeguarding Adults Board and Care Homes Strategy Board.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Croydon is represented on the Croydon Health and Wellbeing Board by Edwina Morris, Chair of Healthwatch Croydon. During 2022/23 our representative has effectively carried out this role by ensuring that the published Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment gave due regard to the views of local residents, contributing to discussions about the implications for the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board of the development of the ICS, reviewing the proposals in the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund Plan to ensure that issues raised with Healthwatch Croydon by local residents were addressed, presenting the 2021/22 Healthwatch Croydon Annual Report, reviewing the SWL ICP strategy and Joint forward plan and the proposed process for refreshing the Health and Well-being Strategy."

Gordon Kay, Healthwatch Croydon Manager is co-opted as a member of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee and presents reports at each meeting where relevant. Healthwatch Croydon is represented on the South West London Integrated Care System by Alyssa Chase-Vilchez, South West London Healthwatch Executive Officer, who attends the Integrated Care Partnership, Integrated Care Board and other key boards and groups and liaises with the six local Healthwatch organisations.

2022–2023 Outcomes

Project/ activity	Changes made to services
Urgent and Emergency Care	Our insight helped redesign the service including the introduction of a new GP Hub in the north of the borough and closer working between NHS111 and local GPs
Access to services for those who cannot speak English	This project contributed to a larger piece of work completed by Healthwatch England but has also been fed back to Croydon University Hospital and local Primary Care services to explore their translation and interpretation provision.

2022–2023 Outcomes continued

Project/ activity	Changes made to services
Experiences of Dementia Pathway	Feedback from patients, carers and friends and family influenced and were included in the Dementia Strategy 2022–25 which is due to be released in the summer. All health and social care organisations will look to adhere to this strategy.
Mystery shop of GP websites	Each of the 45 GPs got a specific report and advice on what they needed to work on to improve their website. We have received much feedback and thanks. We also coordinated our work with similar work taking place within the NHS to complement the work they were undertaking from a compliance position.
Patient knowledge and experience of the MyCare Patient Portal at Croydon University Hospital	Changes to the service were made within weeks of the data being shared including linking it to the NHS app. There are further commitments to communicating the service better and supporting patients in using it with a user guide.
London Ambulance Service strategy letter	Having won funding from LAS to provide insight to help define their strategy they have acknowledged the contribution we have made and are using this along with 18 other London Healthwatch to define their strategy which they will present to Healthwatch England London Network in the autumn of 2023.
Young people’s mental health	We have already shared data with two schools surveyed and also with the Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Partnership Board who have acknowledged the importance of family in friends in supporting young people with their mental health.
Pakistani and Bangladeshi views on the COVID and flu vaccines	Funded by NHS England, we fed back findings from detailed interviews which were used to help define the future vaccination rollout strategy with these communities.
Asylum seekers health and wellbeing	We shared our insight with the Health Inclusion Steering Group and recruited an Asylum Seekers volunteer ambassador. We will continue to focus on this with the insight we have received.



Healthwatch Croydon

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