



The Strength of Community Voices

Healthwatch Southwark
Annual Report 2025/26

Contents

A message from our co-Chairs	3
About us	4
Our year in numbers	5
A year of making a difference	6
Working together for change	7
Making a difference in the community	8
Listening to your experiences	9
Hearing from all communities	13
Information and signposting	17
Showcasing volunteer impact	21
Finance and future priorities	25
Statutory statements	27



**Acting Chief Executive
Healthwatch England**
Chris McCann

“

The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our Advisory Board Chairs

At Healthwatch Southwark, we work to improve local health and care services by making sure patients' and carers' voices are heard, and that services respond to their needs. We're a small, dedicated team supported by amazing volunteers, including our Community Health Ambassadors, who help us connect with diverse communities.

Key to this is our independence, meaning we represent local people without fear or favour. Sadly, the Government's new NHS bill proposes the closure of Healthwatch, losing that vital ingredient. For example, this year it underpinned our local campaigning, work with the Kings' Fund and our Enter and View activities.

Nevertheless, our superb team have continued to work hard on behalf of Southwark residents throughout the year. This report covers the many highlights of a very busy period.

Finally, I'd like to welcome Natasha Wright, who has taken on the role of Deputy Chair of the Advisory Board.



Chair
Graham Head

“Highlights for me have included our ongoing work looking at the experiences of people living in temporary accommodation and our submission to the Government's mental health consultation.”



Deputy Chair
Natasha Wright

“During a year of change for the NHS and social care, Healthwatch Southwark continued to demonstrate the importance of having an independent organisation to amplify patient voices”

I am pleased to take on the role of Deputy Chair. It is a privilege to help empower residents in Southwark to influence health and social care improvements.

Given the government's announcement, we have begun planning the transition of the team to become a Community Health Team at Community Southwark. This will ensure that the knowledge and trusted relationships built by the team can be maintained, and that local voluntary and community organisations are included in discussions about changes to health and care services, such as the creation of neighbourhood health services.

Our team has continued their valuable work to strengthen relationships with underserved communities. Highlights have included seeing positive change, such as GP surgeries in North Southwark introducing Learning Disability and Autism champions after sharing our project findings. We also relaunched Enter and View, allowing us to fully use of our statutory powers to visit health and care services.

About us

Healthwatch Southwark is your health and social care champion. We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



Our mission

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



Our values are:

Equity: We are compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

Collaboration: We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

Impact: We are ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We are accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

Independence: Our agenda is driven by the public. We are a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

Truth: We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

In addition, we adhere to the values of Community Southwark, our host organisation, which are:

- We are bold
- We work with the community for the community
- We make a difference
- We are inclusive

These values are always underpinned by:

- Our commitment to respecting diversity and promoting equality
- Putting Southwark communities at the heart of everything we do

Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported approximately **7,035** people to have their say, get information about their care and find support services available.

We currently employ core 3 Healthwatch staff and 3 staff to coordinate and deliver our Community Health Ambassador Programme funded by Public Health. Our work is supported by over 220 volunteers and Community Health Ambassadors.



Reaching out:

300 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us through feedback, projects, and outreach work helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

156 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as how to make a complaint, help to resolve access issues and housing issue.

6,579 people accessed health and social care information and opportunities to shape local services on our social media platforms and in our newsletter



Championing your voice:

We were pleased to publish our report "[*Towards Inclusive Healthcare: Rethinking mental health services for Black African and Caribbean communities in Southwark*](#)" which explores how mental health services are perceived and experienced by these communities. This was our most popular report this year.

Other headline projects this year explored the health and wellbeing impacts on refugees and asylum seekers living in or moving on from asylum temporary accommodation.



Statutory funding:

We are funded by Southwark Council. In 2025/26 we received **£157,635** which is about the same as last year.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Southwark. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We enabled independent patient and resident voices to shape London's Neighbourhood Health Service model by facilitating Healthwatch participation in system [simulation workshops](#). Three London Healthwatch organisations participated, with one taking the lead to ensure lived experience shaped planning. This was strengthened by Southwark volunteers and Community Health Ambassadors, who added community perspectives. Together, these contributions directly influenced the design, learning, and emerging operating model, while reinforcing co-production and embedding a culture of listening in strategic decision making.

Summer

We published our [2025/26 priorities report](#), setting a clear strategic focus for our work on temporary accommodation and restarting our Enter and View activity at Southwark Resource Centre. By refining our priorities, our staff team and Advisory Board ensured resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact, strengthening our ability to deliver core functions. This focused approach supports more effective planning and helps ensure that local people's experiences shape our work and influence system priorities.

Autumn

We reviewed and provided evidence based feedback on South London and Maudsley NHS Trust's emerging strategy, drawing on our research into [Black mental health](#). This helped highlight strengths and identify areas for improvement, ensuring the needs and experiences of Southwark's Black communities are reflected in future plans. Our input strengthened our 'critical friend' relationship with the Trust, leading to an invitation to join a planning group for their upcoming strategy event and positioning Healthwatch Southwark to continue influencing its development.

Winter

In partnership with VCS organisations, our temporary accommodation project raised awareness of the health and wellbeing implications and wider challenges facing residents living in this type of accommodation. Focusing strongly on refugees and asylum seekers with lived experience, we reinforced the urgent need for a coordinated system response by achieving coverage in the [South East Londoner](#). Our findings were amplified further when we presented at the Southwark Health of the Borough event on co-located housing.

Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Southwark are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at South East London Integrated Care Board (ICB)

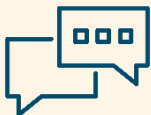
This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across South East London to achieve the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Thematic insights from reports written and published by South East London Healthwatch were collated quarterly and shared with the South East London ICB, to support system oversight. We provided balanced, thematic insights for improvement in our regular reporting to the ICB Quality Directorate, the Engagement Assurance Committee, the Primary and Secondary Care Interface and the Equalities subcommittee. Representation at system level meetings is covered jointly by the Chief Executives of Lambeth and Healthwatch Greenwich.

A big conversation:



Following the 2025 closure announcement, local Healthwatch organisations have worked together to challenge the lack of patient voice in emerging 10-year plans. Through coordinated campaigning, promotion of a [national petition](#), and local engagement activity, we have raised awareness, mobilised communities, and influenced debate. By amplifying public concerns and working collectively, we have strengthened the case for maintaining independent patient voice at the heart of health and care decision-making.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



In March, we presented an overview of the Southwark Community Health Ambassador Network and casual worker model which was met with very positive feedback from South East London Champion Coordinators. Attendees particularly valued Southwark's structured approach to recruitment, training, and operational oversight. This has the potential to strengthen ambassador programmes across the network, improving consistency, compliance, and confidence, and enabling more coordinated, scalable delivery of community outreach and health engagement activities.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in Southwark this year:



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

We co-presented our 2024/25 annual report to the Partnership Southwark Strategic Board, highlighting the impact of our Community Health Ambassadors. This enabled reflection on insights and shaping shared priorities for upcoming neighbourhood health development plans. A review of link worker roles highlighted overlaps and strengths, with findings supporting clearer role definitions, stronger collaboration, promoting a more integrated wellbeing ecosystem across Southwark and improving consistency for residents.



Getting services to involve the public

By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

Southwark's Creative Health Strategy has embedded lived experience, addressing barriers, and promoting culturally responsive services as a result of sharing insights from our Black mental health project. These findings have shaped funding and support for Black-led organisations tackling inequalities. The Creative Health Strategy Steering Group ensures these priorities inform action plans, governance, and resource allocation, strengthening inclusive creative health provision for Black residents.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

We published a [one year update](#) on our Learning Disabilities and Autism (LDA) access project, showing several examples of positive change resulting from this research project. This has included informing Guy's & St Thomas' All Age Autism Strategy, embedding co-production, accessible communication, flexible appointments, and staff training. Our work also shaped council strategy, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment reporting, and ICS priorities.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.

- We listen to real experiences through surveys, interviews, and outreach, especially from those whose voices are often overlooked.
- We highlight what matters by sharing feedback with services to uncover issues that might otherwise go unnoticed.
- We help drive change by making services more accessible and person-centred, often through community-based events and direct engagement.



Improving access to mental health services and support for Black communities

Last year, we championed the voices of Black African and Caribbean communities to highlight inequalities in access to mental health services across Southwark.

Through our [research](#), residents, community groups, and frontline organisations made it clear that stigma, lack of culturally appropriate support, and distrust of services were significant barriers to getting the help they need.

What did we do

We carried out surveys, focus groups and interviews to better understand how Black African and Caribbean communities experience mental health services in Southwark. We worked closely with community organisations and hosted engagement activities to explore barriers to care, identify solutions, and develop practical recommendations for preventative care. From this we developed and distributed over 150 [signposting directories](#) of local, non-clinical support services, specifically for Black communities.

Key things we heard:



1 in 3

of all participants who had used a mental health service in the last year experienced at least one issue with the care they received.

GP's

remain the main route into mental health support, followed by Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT's).

100%

reported an interest in a form of non-clinical, community based mental health service to understand and address their needs.

Our work showed stigma, distrust, and cultural barriers limit access to care, with Black men particularly relying on informal support, highlighting strong demand for culturally appropriate, community-based services.

What difference did this make?

Following our research and ongoing engagement with partners and communities, we have influenced the development of local services, including work with South London and Maudsley, the recommissioning of the Wellbeing Hub, and wider council and ICS priorities. More priority is now being given to addressing inequalities by continuing to share our insights to strengthened awareness of Black mental health and the need for culturally appropriate, community based support in Southwark.

Black mental health project feedback

Charlene Brown, Quality Assurance and Communication Lead, Lewisham Children and Adolescent Mental Health Support team

This space essentially offers underrepresented Black men's mental health. Something that is too often withheld in broader society allowance. It allows for the expression of emotional awareness without judgment. It allows for safety and inclusivity, where vulnerability is not seen as weakness but as truth. It allows openness around topics often stigmatized; such as sexuality, mental health, and substance use, creating a space where honesty can exist without fear. It allows each man to show up fully and authentically, sharing his whole self, not just the parts the world says are acceptable. These gatherings are not just beneficial, they are necessary, they are a reminder that healing, growth, and freedom begin with being allowed to simply be.

Wil Lewis, Head of Live Well Integrated Commissioning, Southwark Council and SEL ICB.

Your work has been influential on our end in supporting us to secure additional funding for the Southwark Wellbeing Hub on a recurrent basis...this report emphasises how important and valuable local Healthwatch services can be to the communities they serve - long may it continue in Southwark.

Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

The report is a valuable reflection of residents' voices and highlights the important collaborative work Healthwatch has led with partners across the borough

Kunlé Oyedeji, Chief Executive, The Empowerment Group

Many thanks for the PCREF lunch and learn session today. It was very informative and useful to be in especially as an organisation based in Southwark. The directory is great, and we are glad to be in it.

Strengthening community voice and reducing health inequalities

Across the Community Health Ambassadors network, we are supporting local people to actively improve their communities.

These case studies show how the programme builds confidence and develops practical skills within communities. They create clear pathways into employment while improving access to trusted health information. Overall, they strengthen community voice and contribute to reducing health inequalities.

Saran – Building confidence and career progression

Saran joined the Southwark Community Health Ambassadors Programme to develop her skills and give back to her community. Through training and ongoing support, she reported a significant boost in confidence and developed a strong interest in health promotion. As a direct result of her involvement, Saran has secured a role within healthcare and is now part of the outreach team. She credits the programme with shaping her career goals, particularly her passion for empowering others through lived experience.

Tina – Improving access to community health support

Tina used the knowledge and confidence gained through the programme to address health inequalities in her local area. She established monthly health check sessions on the Cossall Estate, providing residents with accessible health information and support. Her work has helped engage individuals who may not regularly access health services, improving awareness of preventative care and encouraging healthier behaviours. Thanks to her ongoing work, residents on the Cossall Estate have increased awareness of sickle cell and greater understanding of how to support someone living with the disease.

Adele – Inclusion and community empowerment

Adele joined the programme with limited confidence as English was not her first language. Through the supportive ambassador network, she felt welcomed and empowered to participate. Over time, Adele built the confidence to actively engage and support her community with health information. She has since progressed to join the outreach team, extending her reach and impact. For example, her work has helped French speaking individuals to access and navigate mainstream health services.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Southwark. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Listening to refugees and asylums seekers' experiences of living and moving on from temporary accommodation
- Understanding individuals who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and who are accessing local food banks to explore affordable, healthy cooking options and culturally familiar recipes.
- Utilising our service feedback regarding access, meeting patient needs, and their experiences of care, to inform the Southeast London's Equality Delivery Scoring for Paediatric Community Dental Services.



Improving understanding of health inequalities experienced by refugees and asylum seekers.

We investigated the health impacts of asylum accommodation

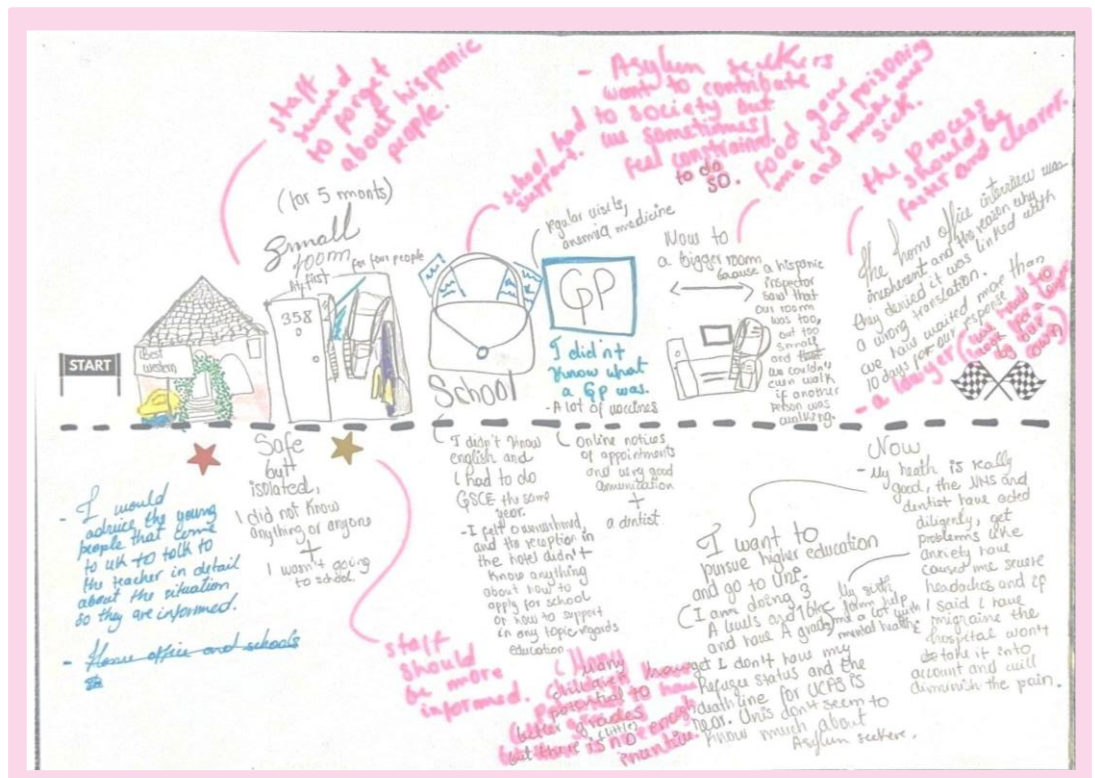
People told us about the long term health impacts of living in unsuitable conditions in asylum accommodation. Factors including poor quality food, overcrowding, safety concerns, and damp and mould caused residents to experience respiratory and digestive health issues, pain, and poor mental health.

We learned that the move-on process for newly recognised refugees is extremely challenging, due to lack of timely and accessible information, short eviction periods, and limited housing options. As a result, many refugees become homeless, particularly single adults. This, as well as disrupted access to healthcare services, further worsens health outcomes for these communities.

What difference did this make?

We are now awaiting responses from NHS service providers, Southwark Council and South East London Integrated Care Board, to the recommendations in this report. In the meantime, we have used insights gathered from this research to submit evidence to the government's consultation on Earned Settlement reform.

Photo of a journey map created by a participant of the project showing their experience navigating the asylum process



Better food, stronger voices, healthier communities.

Residents reported confusion around practical medical advice particularly related to weight loss and diabetes management, lack of cultural relevance, low cooking confidence, and concerns about affordability, leaving many unsure how to eat healthily within tight budgets and address health issues.

To help, we supported our Community Health Ambassadors to deliver hands-on cooking sessions using affordable ingredients and culturally familiar recipes, combining practical demonstrations, food tasting, and group learning to build confidence, address misconceptions, and show participants how to prepare healthy, enjoyable meals within tight budgets.

What difference did this make?

Participants reported increased confidence in cooking, improved understanding of nutrition and hydration, and a renewed interest in healthier traditional practices. Crucially, the programme bridged the gap between awareness and action, equipping people with realistic skills to improve their health. It also strengthened community connections, creating a supportive environment where individuals felt heard, valued, and empowered to take control of their wellbeing. By centering lived experiences, the *Fuel Your Body* project replaced generic advice with practical, culturally relevant solutions people could use in their daily lives. Trust grew significantly, especially among those initially disengaged or sceptical, leading to stronger participation and openness to change.



Community voices improving local health access

Residents reported low awareness of services, limited engagement in community activities, and poor communication, leaving many disconnected from local health support despite strong interest in improving wellbeing.

To help, we supported our Community Health Ambassadors to carry out targeted outreach, surveys, and conversations to understand how residents use Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs), identifying gaps in awareness, access, and suitability as community health spaces. Using these insights from the *Bringing Health Closer to You* project, we worked to strengthen the role of TRAs by improving visibility, promoting activities, and supporting them as trusted, local hubs for delivering health services.

What difference did this make?

We established a scalable, community-led model for delivering prevention focused care. Listening to resident needs, revealed that the core issue was not lack of motivation, but gaps in awareness, access, and connection to trusted local support. This insight reframed TRAs as underused yet highly valued community assets, shifting focus towards activating them as accessible health hubs. By aligning with Community Southwark's Premises Project and integrating Community Health Ambassadors, the report findings and recommendations strengthened the case for investing in local infrastructure while supporting local strategic ambitions towards neighbourhood health. Turning evidence into action, this work embeds visible, relevant health support in everyday spaces to reduce inequalities.



Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year 156 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



The strength of collaborative information and signposting in blood donation services

Raising awareness of sickle cell and the importance of ethnically diverse blood donors

The *Every Drop Matters* event supported collaboration between partners, improved access to trusted health information, and increased awareness of sickle cell and blood donation within local communities. It also enabled residents to engage directly with NHS professionals in an accessible community setting, while ensuring lived experience shaped conversations.

This was achieved through a partnership between Healthwatch Southwark, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT), NHS Blood and Transplant, and the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), bringing together services that had not previously worked together to support shared learning and coordinated delivery. Community Health Ambassadors from affected communities played a key role in delivering the event.

Healthwatch Southwark built on this impact by facilitating follow-up engagement with NIHR to support more inclusive research, and the event has since been invited to run again at Urban Village Hall, demonstrating its ongoing value. Read more in our [reflections report](#).

“I really enjoyed working with you and had some very helpful conversations about community collaboration”



What difference did this make?

This work built connections across health and research partners, improving coordination and enabled better engagement approaches. It increased access to trusted information on sickle cell and blood donation for underrepresented communities. Residents were able to engage directly with NHS professionals in an accessible setting, strengthening involvement and trust. Ongoing partnerships with NIHR ensured community insight continues to inform inclusive research and future research planning.

Connecting the dots with services to improve patient access and action feedback

Establishing regular in-person engagement across health settings

Regular, in-person engagement across Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT), including Evelina Children's Hospital, has improved access to information and created more consistent opportunities for residents to share their experiences.

It has also strengthened relationships with services, making it easier to share feedback directly and ensuring insight is used more effectively to inform service improvement. This progress was enabled by Healthwatch Southwark building a consistent presence in these settings, moving from initial trial activity to agreed regular engagement sessions.

“Thank you so much for this, it is incredibly helpful! Really appreciate you reaching out with this.” – Guys and St Thomas' Foundation Trust



Strengthening local health connections to improve access

Creating connections across local health and community forums to improve access to information and strengthen signposting pathways.

Engagement with local partners through grassroots forums, including the Southwark Equity Neighbourhood Health meetings and the Black Mental Health Community Action Group, strengthened relationships across the voluntary, community, and statutory sectors.

This improved how organisations connect with each other and increased more effective signposting to appropriate support for residents through Healthwatch Southwark making connections through key resources, including the Black Mental Health service directory and report findings, so that organisations could build relationships to inform local priorities and understand available services.

“This is a match made in Heaven” – VCS feedback about partnership connections

Creating supportive spaces for men to share their experiences

A central part of our work is creating meaningful spaces where lived experience can be shared, heard, and valued.

Male Community Health Ambassadors brought men's health into sharper focus across the network, introducing vital perspectives and strengthening understanding in a predominantly female space.

Through honest, lived experience storytelling, Jeff Thompson led a powerful session on prostate cancer awareness, creating an open environment that encouraged questions, deepened knowledge, and built confidence.

As founder of Cancer Don't Let It Win, Jeff extends this impact beyond the network, fostering connection, openness, and support for men, families, and carers navigating diagnosis and recovery.

His leadership significantly increased awareness of early signs and support pathways, strengthening trusted signposting across the community.

What difference did this make?

As a result, the network is now better connected, more confident, and better equipped to engage men with empathy, credibility, and culturally relevant support.

This has driven more inclusive, informed, and collaborative approaches to men's health within the network.



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers and Community Health Ambassadors have given approximately **2,440 hours** of their time to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Represented us at strategic meetings to ensure patient and resident voice is embedded in decision making.
- Supported their communities to share their views and experiences of using local services through health outreach activities, engagement events, promoting surveys and hosting interviews.
- Joined our steering groups to help us shape our projects and future priorities to enable us to share what matters most for local service improvement



Co-creating inclusive and responsive local programmes

Feedback from Community Health Ambassadors revealed opportunities to strengthen roles, influence, confidence, and recognition through more meaningful involvement.

We delivered a structured Away Day using workshops, group activities, and open discussions to create space for Ambassadors to share experiences, identify challenges, and co-design solutions. This enabled Ambassadors to actively shape priorities, contribute to policy development, and build stronger connections within the network.

Key things we heard:

Loved

Ambassadors consistently valued being embedded in communities, building relationships, and working within a diverse, supportive network where their voices were heard and represented.

Achieved

The programme successfully empowered Ambassadors with skills and confidence, increasing community engagement, health awareness, and participation, while significantly expanding the network and its visibility.

To improve

Address gaps in information sharing, limited participation from some groups, and the need to improve awareness of the programme and opportunities both internally and in the wider community.



This was the first time I really felt like we were shaping the programme together, not just being told what it is.

What difference did this make?

The Away Day created a clear change in Ambassador engagement and ownership. Ambassadors moved from feeling uncertain to actively contributing to programme design, with many going on to support wider outreach and engagement activities, including paid opportunities. It sparked interest in further training and development, with participants identifying how they wanted to apply their new skills in facilitation, advocacy, and community engagement. Importantly, the session directly informed proposals for the future direction, including a co-created policy that clearly defines the roles of Ambassadors, funders, and coordinators. This has strengthened accountability, improved structure, and ensured that Ambassador voices are embedded, shaping delivery in a more sustainable, inclusive, and responsive way.

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.



Ese Anabui – Project steering group member

“

Taking part in the Refugees and Asylum Seekers research project has been a meaningful experience.

It's been rewarding to contribute to work that amplifies the voices of people who are often unheard, and to support a project that aims to create real impact for communities especially the underrepresented community members.

”

“

Being an Enter and View volunteer with Healthwatch Southwark is a great way to give something back to the community. I got informative training and lots of support from Rhyana and the team. I've just done my first visit. It was so interesting to check up on a local service and make sure it's doing a good job for the people of Southwark

”



Pete Fleischmann – Enter and View Volunteer

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchsouthwark.org



020 3848 6546



info@healthwatchsouthwark.org

Making positive contributions

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.



“

With the supportive and welcoming energy of the team, I found myself working on some important projects which allowed me to contribute to something that helps the wider community. I had always been curious as to how being a researcher could help improve services in healthcare and social care, and I am now able to see actionable contributions develop from ‘behind the scenes.’

This is the most satisfying part of the role for me and being able to see how everyone comes together on projects from writing reports, designing workshops and research projects, all the way to group workshops in action and resulting recommendations sent out to trusts and services.

The role has opened my eyes to the positive contributions I can make with the skills I have been developing over the past few years, and the good that I can do is worthwhile and impactful.

Sen – Healthwatch Southwark Research

”

Read the full story here: [Sen's Volunteering Story](#)

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchsouthwark.org



020 3848 6546



info@healthwatchsouthwark.org

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Southwark Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£157,635	Expenditure on pay	£147,969
		Non-pay expenditure	£4,981
		Office and management fee	£8,397
Total income	£157,635	Total Expenditure	£161,347

Additional income is broken down into:

Public Health funding:

- We received **£146,222** from Southwark Council's Public Health team for the Community Health Ambassador Coordinator role, two part time Ambassadors and to deliver the activities of the project.

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch Lambeth and Healthwatch Greenwich receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support South-East London Healthwatch representation at this level.

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Participation and Involvement in SEL ICB governance meetings (x13)	£1,755
Producing the South East London Quarterly Insight report	£810
Total	£2565

Finance and future priorities

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Progress reviews of past projects to ensure we are holding services to account.
2. Completing the priorities set for the duration of our contract – housing project, Enter and View programme.
3. Transition project which will focus on integrating our team into our host organisation – Community Southwark – which aims to understand how to support Southwark's VCS to engage with health and care partners throughout development of Neighbourhood Health plans



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Southwark is hosted by Community Southwark, based at 11 Market Place, Bermondsey, London, SE16 3UQ

Healthwatch Southwark uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the license agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch Board consists of 7 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2025/26, the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as the future of Healthwatch, supporting us with a local campaign to retain patient voice in new health system structures, support for the team following the closure announcements. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2025/26, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, attending meetings of community groups and forums, hosting topical events such as coffee mornings and signposting exhibition-style events for local services to share what they offer to communities.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, send directly to stakeholders, share it with our Advisory Board, volunteers, Southwark Council, local Trusts.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had two providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were issues regarding following up with formal responses to reports and recommendations, which were escalated by us to the Healthwatch England, there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to Adult Social Care and Community Mental Health team practitioners team meetings, Learning Disability and Autism Group, Primary Care Committee, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission as well as key strategic meetings such as Southwark Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, Integrator Delivery Board and the Partnership Southwark Strategic Board to name a few.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in South East London Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB). For example, our 'Rethinking Mental Health' report was presented to the ICB's Equalities Sub-committee and used findings from this research to inform the commissioning of the Southwark Wellbeing Hub. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Southwark is represented on the Southwark Health and Wellbeing Board by Rhyana Ebanks-Babb, Manager.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending Board meetings to present public insights, challenging decisions that impact patient care and public involvement, ensuring the strategic vision centres authentic engagement with local residents' experiences in Insight meetings and feeding into the boards Neighbourhood Health plans.

Healthwatch Southwark is represented on Partnership Southwark Strategic Board, SEL Data Usage Committee, SEL London Care Record Governing Body, London Health Data Strategy Independent Information Access Group by Graham Head and South East London Integrated Care Board and Partnership by leads Folake Segun (Healthwatch Lambeth) and Joy Beishon (Healthwatch Greenwich).

Statutory statements

Enter and view

We conducted no visits this year, however we restarted our programme of work to prepare Authorised Representatives to conduct visits during 2026/27.

2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Contribution to NHS digital transformation (e.g. NHS App / NHS Online webinars)	Ensured community voice shaped future digital services, highlighting barriers like digital exclusion and access issues
Partnership working with advocacy and support organisations (e.g. POHWER)	Strengthened referral pathways and improved support for residents needing help navigating complaints and services
Digital Vital 5 health checks (e.g. Community Health Ambassador involvement)	Shaping the digital offer of preventative health checks and increasing access
Partnership building through research and knowledge exchange events (NIHR Applied Research Collaborative)	Shared best practice and strengthened cross-sector collaboration to improve engagement with underserved communities
Community-led insight feeding into Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	Positioned Healthwatch research as trusted evidence, influencing borough-level understanding of health inequalities
Input into national policy consultations (e.g. Earned Settlement)	Amplified local community voice at national level, influencing wider policy and system direction
Volunteer and Ambassador involvement in steering groups, boards, and system level meetings	Increased community representation in decision-making spaces and embedded lived experience across system governance
Development and delivery of community engagement resources (e.g. directories, accessible reports, Easy Read videos)	Improved accessibility of information, enabling more people to understand services, engage with findings, and act on health information

Healthwatch Southwark
11 Market Place,
Bermondsey,
London,
SE16 3UQ

 www.healthwatchsouthwark.org

 020 3848 6546

 info@healthwatchsouthwark.org

 @HealthwatchSouthwark

 @HWSouthwark

 @healthwatchsouthwarkofficial

 @healthwatchsouthwark