

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Southwark
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our chair

As the long-term impact of the pandemic continues to emerge, we know that health inequalities disproportionately impact the people whose voices are least heard in health and social care services. For this reason, I am highly appreciative of the dedication of staff and volunteers to rebuild strong relationships with the community. Gathering views via all available communication channels we have strived to increase our presence locally.

Our projects such as GP Access and Mental Health Needs is a testament of our ongoing commitment to the people we serve. Our recent report on 'Mental Health Services Unmet Need in Southwark' identified areas for improvement in adult community mental health services. We are proud to share that this led to a comprehensive improvement plan from the local service provider. This highlights the importance of valuing the voice of the community and meeting the needs of all sections of the local community.

We are a strong team at Healthwatch Southwark and commit to being a reliable and responsive resource across Southwark as we continue in recovery from the pandemic. We are continuously looking to develop positive partnerships with local organisations to support co-production in our projects and to share our knowledge and expertise.



Sheona St Hilaire
Healthwatch Southwark Chair



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”

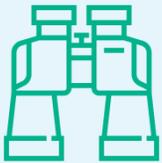
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Southwark is your local health and social care champion. From London Bridge to Dulwich and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other 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.



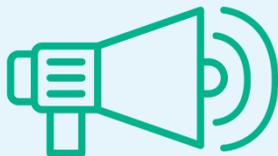
Our values

- 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.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



2200 people

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

300 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

2 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

Mental Health Services: Unmet Need in Southwark

which investigated people's positive and negative experiences of adult community mental health services and identified the key areas of unmet need, requiring improvements.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

131

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **100 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£140,000

which is **16.5% more** than the previous year.

We also currently employ

4 staff

who help us carry out this work. previous year.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring

We launched the Community Health Ambassadors Network (volunteer programme) to ensure marginalised and vulnerable communities were heard and were given accurate and timely information and resources on Covid-19 information relevant to their communities.



We undertook a project to hear the experiences and views of young and older people on Covid -19 vaccinations- this informed local vaccinations strategy.

Summer



When people struggled to see their GP face-to-face (mainly due to service changes as a result of Covid 19 restrictions), we took part in a joint project with the South East London Healthwatch network, investigating people's experiences of accessing, or trying to access GP services.

Autumn



With the increasing demand for mental health services during the Covid-19 pandemic, we conducted a project to identify areas of unmet need in adult community mental health services and made recommendations to the local provider, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, on how to address them.

Winter

Recognising that young people are an underrepresented group in Southwark, we launched a 'Young People's Health Project' aiming to boost engagement with them, identify their key health and wellbeing challenges and empower them to be more actively involved in health and social care decision making to ensure services meet their needs.

We launched a 'Health Inequalities Project' to focus our work on Black African and Caribbean and Latin American communities. We aim to provide a platform for these groups to share their views, experiences and needs so that we can identify their key issues and raise awareness of them with decision makers to drive change.

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 feedback to services to help them improve.



Improving Adult Community Mental Health Services

Thanks to service users for sharing their experiences of adult community mental health services with us last year, we helped South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) develop an action plan to improve their services and tackle unmet need in Southwark.

Working with a steering group of residents with experiences of mental health services, we developed a survey asking about individuals experiences of a range of SLaM services across several domains of care in which we could identify unmet need including access, waiting, suitability, impact and staff. We heard from 71 service users and 10 carers. These individuals had generally not already been part of existing patient involvement activities, demonstrating how our work helped to boost their engagement.

Key Findings

We saw a pattern of extremes in experiences of mental health services, with individuals reflecting on either very good or very poor experiences. The key areas of unmet need identified within adult community-based services included:

- Issues with referral and assessment processes.
- Lack of information about the services available and the processes and waiting times for them.
- Unmet service provision and barriers to access for individuals with complex needs including those with experience of autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), personality disorder, eating disorders and serious mental illness.

Notably, we also identified areas of 'met need' which included opportunities for patient and public involvement, holistic approaches to care, kind and supportive staff, and accessible and impactful Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Cognitive Analytical Therapy (CAT) services.

Recommendations

We called for improvements in the accessibility and flexibility of services, more communication, transparency, and accountability with patients, shorter waiting times, increased service user and carer representation in decision making, the prioritisation of staff continuity and the development of clearer pathways and a proper step-down care service that includes assessment following treatment and discharge.

What difference did this make

SLaM provided a formal response to our report, outlining some specific developments that are underway to address the gaps in provision of adult mental health services we identified. We have organised a workshop for the community to highlight how this work has made a difference and promoted improvements to mental health services.

Improving Access to GP Services

Thanks to Southwark residents for sharing their experiences of accessing, or trying to access, GP services, we have opened up a discussion with Southwark Primary Care Group to identify where they can make improvements to help people access services.

We received widespread feedback about local people having difficulties accessing face-to-face appointments with their GPs and using digital and telephone appointment booking systems.

We carried out a survey asking Southwark residents about their experiences of booking (or trying to book) and attending GP appointments since the lifting of lockdown on 19th July 2021. We also conducted an audit of all Southwark GP websites, looking at whether they featured relevant information and how easily accessible it was.

Key Findings

- Many people are facing GP access issues linked to difficulties with appointment booking processes, long wait times, limited availability of appointments and difficulty accessing face-to-face appointments.
- There have been some positive developments since the changes to GP access including increased efficiency in accessing prescriptions and appointments and not having to wait in reception.
- GP websites offer opportunities to book appointments but there are limited extended hour appointments available and it can be difficult to cancel appointments or find information about face-to-face options and interpreter services.

Recommendations

We called for GPs to offer more appointments, including face-to-face options, a more simple and flexible booking system, regular updates on access options, a more personalised service, and opportunities for users to review their experiences.

What difference did this make

This project has enabled us to foster a closer partnership with the Southwark Primary Care Group which includes a consortium of the GP federation and Southwark CCG Primary Care Commissioning team. We have been actively involved with their Access Plan meetings and presented our research findings at the Southwark Borough Based Board. GPs are currently reviewing their websites based on the findings from our website audit and are seeking our advice on improving patient involvement and engagement opportunities. We have highlighted our concerns with communications between GPs and patients and are currently having discussions to find a way to positively highlight the work of GPs behind the scenes, to improve public understanding and expectation. GPs will be offering an enhanced service in October 2022 with more face-to-face appointments which will help to tackle access issues.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

We have been enhancing our community engagement opportunities and getting local people more involved in the improvement of services.



Putting community engagement at the heart of our work

We have developed new and creative ways to engage the community.

During the pandemic, we had to adapt our community engagement strategy to the online world. We launched a programme of diverse online events and workshops to improve our community profile, connect people with local services, raise awareness of key health issues and start conversations about mental health and wellbeing. As opportunities for face-to-face engagement returned, we started visiting community hubs and hosting signposting and feedback clinics to offer different opportunities to engage with us.



Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We noticed a disconnect between complaints processes and our community's needs. We gathered feedback from people about their issues and have been liaising with complaints teams from local services to suggest improvements. To improve public understanding of complaints processes, we hosted an 'Ultimate Guide to Complaints' workshop with representatives from a local advocacy service and NHS Trust and social care complaints teams.



Tackling health inequalities

We have been working with mental health services and organisations to raise issues and influence improvements.

Studies show that people from Black African and Caribbean groups are more likely to suffer poor mental health and experience barriers to accessing mental health care. We have partnered with local organisations to facilitate opportunities for residents from these communities to voice their concerns and share their experiences of access issues. We plan to share the feedback with local mental health services to drive improvements.

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 helped people by:

- Listening to people's experiences of health and social care services.
- Sharing information and helping people to access the services they need.
- Escalating cases with the service provider when people are struggling to get a response.
- Collaborating with service providers to address patient's concerns on a system level.



Improving mental health services

Our local advocacy service, POhWER, came to us with some concerns about South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) hospital. Three issues were raised relating to the complaints handling process, patient experience in inpatient wards and racial inequalities in the sectioning process. We are meeting regularly with POhWER and Healthwatch Lambeth to discuss these issues and we linked them with SLaM's Patient & Public Involvement team to collaborate on tackling these issues. We are also reviewing SLaM's improvement work including their new complaints process map to ensure these developments will effectively address the key issues identified. We will conduct Enter and View visits in SLaM's inpatient wards. This will give us an opportunity to observe the condition of the wards, gather patient and staff feedback and make recommendations to drive improvements.



Social care complaints support

At one of our outreach engagements, we met a resident who told us about their struggle to get a response to their care home complaint. For months, they had been continuously raising complaints in relation to health and safety and hygiene standards at Tower Bridge Home with the management team, without much success. The resident had reached a stage where they felt hopeless and defeated. We supported them by escalating the case with the Social Care Complaints Team from Southwark Council. The Complaints Team was helpful and followed up on the case, effectively taking over the management of the complaint. As we restart our Enter and View programme, we plan to prioritise a visit to the care home to review the agreed improvements.



Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in the NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped conduct research, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Supported database management, so we can provide reliable information to residents.
- Created a vital communication channel between public health Covid-19 guidelines and the community during months of pandemic.
- Assisted with our in-person community engagement activities.
- Facilitated wellbeing workshops to support residents during times of exceptional hardship for the community.



Adriana

"I joined hoping to improve my skills in research and work alongside a team with similar goals to mine- to improve health care quality and access. I contributed by interviewing residents of Southwark about their experience with accessing mental health services and their opinions on the effectiveness of GP practices. I have also been running monthly wellbeing workshops to help the local community with common wellbeing issues like improving confidence or boosting your mood."



Moosa

"Volunteering with Healthwatch has been instrumental in INTERIM's development. While the reports published by Healthwatch on the issue of long surgery wait times gave the service it's key focus area, participating in seminars, workshops and conversations as a volunteer gave me an opportunity to see the problem through the eyes of vulnerable users, community research groups and Community Health Ambassadors."



Isabella

"I volunteered as Content and Research Volunteer for the Community Health Ambassadors Network. During the pandemic, I wanted to feel a part of my local community and support in any way possible. I researched and provided messaging and support related to the pandemic while also understanding the needs and concerns from Ambassadors' communities in Southwark. It was a great opportunity to understand community health engagement!"



Do you feel inspired?

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



<https://www.healthwatchsouthwark.org/volunteer-us>



020 3848 6546



info@healthwatchsouthwark.org

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.

Income		Income	
Funding received from the local authority	£140,000	Staff costs	£130,303
Additional funding	£69,591	Operational costs	£53,683
		Support and administration	£25,504
Total income	£209,591	Total expenditure	£209,490

Top five priorities for 2022-23

1. Tackling health inequalities with a specific focus on the following:
 - Mental health within the Black African and Caribbean community.
 - Accessibility of health information for Latin American community.
2. Young People’s Health: establishing a youth panel and getting young people more actively involved in health projects and decision making bodies.
3. Improving access to health and social care services for people with learning disabilities and autism.
4. Reviewing how can ‘wait times’ be better managed for elective care patients.
5. Understanding dental access issues in minority communities.

Next steps

- Our core focus will be to increase our community feedback capacity. This will be achieved by pursuing an active neighbourhood based community engagement approach and utilising our stakeholder partnership networks and volunteer reach in the different communities.
- Restarting our Enter and View Programme is a main priority. We are in the process of planning visits and have already engaged commissioners and stakeholders in discussions. We have also held Enter and View training and have developed volunteer capacity to undertake the visits in the coming months.
- In relation to our top 5 priority areas for 22-23, we are setting up Steering Groups for the different projects. The steering groups will be made up of community leaders, professionals and service users and will provide leadership direction, lead on coproducing project objectives and monitoring the outcomes of the project. This process will ensure our work has good governance and be accountable.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Southwark (Hosted by Community Southwark: www.communitysouthwark.org), 11 Market Place , Bermondsey, London SE16 3UQ

Healthwatch Southwark 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 Advisory Board (which was set up in 2021) consists of 8 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Advisory Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2021/22 the Advisory Board met five times and made decisions on matters such as supporting the host organisation to retender for the Healthwatch contract successfully and also reviewing the organisational structures/ policies to demonstrate Healthwatch Southwark's effectiveness (Healthwatch England Quality Outcome Framework).

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities and use various methods to do this. We undertake 'priorities surveys' to gather feedback on areas that we should focus on, we facilitate community and stakeholder workshops to discuss and agree priorities. We gather feedback from the community by organising focussed engagement events, we use intelligence from community feedback and signposting information to identify key themes/areas that we should prioritise on i.e. last year we received substantial community feedback around GP access issues, as a result we undertook a project to review GP access and made recommendations to improve services.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

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 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

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 working with a travellers organisation called Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG). As part of this work we explored health and social care concerns with the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community and successfully supported Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG) in their successful bid for National Lottery funding to undertake a project to improve access and to reduce barriers and discrimination within health and social care services for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities.

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, circulate to our members, circulate to all key stakeholders i.e. CQC, NHS England, local NHS Trusts, Local Authority Committees/Commissioning Team, Clinical Commissioning Group, community organisations and local health and social care providers.

Responses to recommendations and requests

- All of the local health and social care providers that we engaged with responded to our requests for information and responded to recommendations made.
- This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.
- There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Southwark is represented on the Southwark Health and Wellbeing Board by Shamsur Choudhury, Healthwatch Southwark Manager. During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role in the following ways:

- by attending quarterly meetings (online) as a full voting board member.
- raising local people's views/concerns on emerging issues in health and social care, i.e. we presented our report on local people experiences of health and social care during the pandemic (barriers, challenges faced and what was helping them).
- our Community Health Ambassadors Network work was presented to the Board and their good work was recognised in supporting the community.
- we presented information on Healthwatch Southwark(our role and remit) and suggested to the Health and Wellbeing Board how we can actively support their work i.e. present community feedback data, share patient stories.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Impact
Mental Health Unmet Needs This project reviewed adult community mental health services.	South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust have provided a formal response to our report, outlining specific developments that are underway to address the gaps in provision of adult mental health services we identified.
GP Access This project reviewed GP access in the post Covid-19 environment.	Better working relationship have been formed with the Primary Care Group, they have invited us to their 'Access Plan' meetings, which actively reviews access issues. We have also been actively supporting their engagement i.e. extended GP Hours and improving GP communication with patients.
Waiting Times Project (follow up work from previous year) This project looked at the implications of hospital waiting times on patients.	The findings were presented to many key stakeholders including the Borough Based Board and local NHS Trusts. The service providers have used the findings to inform their improvement programmes internally.



healthwatch

Southwark

Healthwatch Southwark
11 Market Place
Bermondsey
London
SE16 3UQ

www.healthwatchsouthwark.org

t: 020 3848 6546

e: info@healthwatchsouthwark.org

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