

The value of listening

Healthwatch Southwark
Annual Report 2023–2024



healthwatch
Southwark

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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair

This year has been a year of change for Healthwatch Southwark, whereby we have successfully developed and embedded a new Healthwatch Southwark strategy 2023- 2026 to support our efforts in the local community, the team have firmly put in place a holding to account process which encourages service providers to make informed improvements for the betterment of people who use their services and the team will also be holding a Listening Tour across the Southwark borough to ensure all voices in the community have access to us and are heard. It has been a very busy period for us, but a period that has been worthwhile and that has been full of organisational growth.

Over 4500 people made contact with us online and in person. It is our hope that through our collaborations with other local Healthwatches, we believe we have made a positive impact and have been able to influence decisions for the betterment of the local community at the Southeast London Integrated Care System level. The work of the Healthwatch Southwark team has not gone unnoticed amongst Advisory Board members, nor the Southwark Mayor Michael Situ 2023/24 who provided the team with a letter of commendation for all their hard work. On behalf of the Advisory Board, I would like to publicly thank the Healthwatch Southwark team again for their efforts.

“This is my last year as the Chair of the Healthwatch Southwark Advisory Board, it has been an absolute privilege serving and representing the people in the London Borough of Southwark. I am very pleased to welcome our new Chair to take the reigns and lead us on to better and improved opportunities for the benefit of local people, but at the same time ensuring quality over quantity remains our focus within our community work.”

Sheona St Hilaire – London region



Introducing our new Chair

Firstly, it is an honour to be nominated as Chair, and to serve my community. I hope to continue to advocate for improving patients' experiences, promoting health equity and to support the overall objectives of Healthwatch Southwark. It means a great deal to me to represent the voice of the residents and to work collaboratively in empowering them to get involved in order to bring about positive change for the future.

Charlene Young – London Region



About us

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 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.



Year in review

Reaching out:

4,792 people

Engaged with us either through sharing their experiences of health and social care services or via community events and outreach – online and in person – which has helped us to raise awareness of issues and continue working with services to improve care.



115 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as support with finding services, how to raise a complaint, advocacy services and the cost-of-living crisis support.

Making a difference to care:

We published

1 report in September 2023

We have continued to present, promote findings and gain responses to our report:

'Access to Health and Social Care Services for Latin American Communities in Southwark'

which highlighted the accessibility of health information for Latin American communities. Our report was included in a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to explore improvements with local services in Southwark.



We are working on 1 report

Looking into the experiences of adults with learning disabilities and autistic adults in accessing health and social care services

Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

181

outstanding volunteers, a combination of Advisory Board members, Community Health Ambassadors and core Healthwatch Southwark volunteers who gave up

2,044 hours

to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority.
In 2023 - 24 we received

£152,643

which is the same as the previous year.


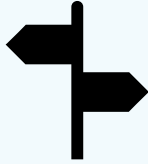






We currently employ

4 staff

who help us carry out our work.



How we've made a difference this year -

<p>Spring – 1st April to 30th June</p>	 <p>We partnered with the Southwark Public Health team on our Community Health Ambassadors Programme, providing opportunities for local residents to volunteer for a range of health promotion activities.</p>	 <p>This supported our engagement, signposting and feedback and enabled us to gain a better understanding of community health needs</p>
<p>Summer – 1st July to 30th September</p>	 <p>We organised a health event to promote our report and recommendations into improving Latin American peoples experiences of accessing health care services</p>	 <p>This led to a range of health care professionals providing health checks and services sharing information about what is available in Portuguese and Spanish</p>
<p>Autumn – 1st October – 30th December</p>	 <p>We continued building our relationship with services who support adults with learning disabilities and Autistic adults</p>	 <p>This helped us create a steering group to support our project research, understand what areas in healthcare are most important and co-design workshops to explore these issues with service users, their carers and service providers</p>
<p>Winter – 1st January to 31st March</p>	 <p>We used intelligence data from our research, signposting and feedback services to increase our influence function</p>	 <p>This helped us feed public voices into a variety of local and national consultations, strategies and surveys. This included Southwark ASC Vision, Southwark Latin American Health Inequalities JSNA, NICE public engagement strategy to name a few.</p>

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with other Healthwatch organisations to ensure the experiences of people in Southwark influence decisions made about services at South East London Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

This year we've worked with the other five Healthwatch across south east London to:



Feed in people's experiences to identify, shape, and develop the six South East London Integrated Care System priorities, the principles that underpin them and the ICS Integrated Care Strategy. We also provided support for this programme's community engagement.

Provide representation on 16 ICS and ICB Boards, Committees, and Groups. Through this participation, we ensured an independent voice for the public, and highlighted the insight and intelligence gathered by SEL Healthwatch to decision makers and health providers.



Develop south east London Healthwatch webpages, bringing together key Healthwatch reports in one place to facilitate health commissioners' access to people's views, experiences, stories, and recommended solutions.

Champion digital inclusion across south east London programmes and services so that as technology use becomes more widespread, the reality of digital exclusion, which many people face, is mitigated.





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.

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

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

Letter of Commendation from Southwark Mayor

We at Healthwatch Southwark are pleased to share the letter of commendation from Mayor Michael Situ for our work in the community supporting residents to address barriers to health and social services.

We acknowledge and appreciate everyone who has supported our work and look forward to reaching more Southwark residents each year!

You can read the letter of commendation here: [Letter from the Mayor of Southwark](#)



Getting services to involve the public

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

During the engagement phase of our healthcare barriers project for adults with learning disabilities and autistic individuals, we actively incorporated feedback from service users and their caregivers. They expressed a desire for World Café-style conversations to involve service providers, allowing them to directly address the challenges they were encountering. This allowed the community to hear directly what provisions and barriers service providers were experiencing and created a welcoming and non-judgemental space for co-designed solutions which we will include in our report.



Conversations in my group among participants that offered support for each other. Two of them exchanged contact details and arranged to meet outside a GP surgery to go together and ask for help with an ASFD assessment for their child.

Improving care over time

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

Since the end of our Latin American Project looking into access issues for this community, we have been piloting our holding to account process which includes holding 6 and 12 month progress reviews with public services. We will ensure we feedback to the steering group and members of the Latin American community. So far we have held one meeting with a local hospital and have booked several other review meetings where summary reports will be completed. This will take some time to refine but we hope this shows historically under-represented communities that we are serious about advocating for the changes they want to see and feel.



There's a summary of other outcomes we've achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.



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:

- Strengthening our relationship with our Community Health Ambassadors by attending more events organised by them
- Attending clinics that are addressing social determinants of health such as people struggling with socio-economic deprivation by the cost of living crisis.
- Ensure we are understanding, capturing and reporting issues using the [QualityAlert](#) reporting system and liaising with key stakeholders and decision makers to drive change
- Using our data to identify who we haven't heard from and targeting future engagement to include those groups e.g. our engagement with service users, carers and professionals using a café conversation method

Championing health through the Community Health Ambassadors Programme

In 2022–23, Healthwatch Southwark has continued to partner with the Public Health team at Southwark Council to support our Community Health Ambassadors Network. The network supports Southwark residents to protect themselves and their communities.

Over the last year, Ambassadors have been instrumental in a range of health promotion and prevention activities, a few of which include:

- A review of the Doctors of the World “Safe Surgeries” programme where local GP surgeries who have signed up, were audited against their commitment to this programme.
- Supported The Health Roadshow Van and static Health Kiosks which provides free Vital 5 health checks to local residents
- Participate in the Long COVID Health Management workshops created and delivered by Guys and St Thomas Hospital and share vital health information within their communities.
- Attend The London-wide Community Champions Development Programme which honoured Southwark Health Ambassadors at the House of Lords
- Organise a range of community-led events, capacity building activities, training in areas that support the local community to build confidence, enhance wellbeing and increase community cohesion.

The Community Health Ambassadors programme has been influential in getting key health messages out to residents, gather insights about the barriers being experienced, help us and Public Health understand health behaviours and connect people to services in Southwark.



“I feel very happy, satisfied and encouraged seeing the result and impact of what I do in my community. Initially, I was volunteering as manager of our food bank. Due to trainings and networking meeting, I found better ways to improve the quality of life of the people coming to us for support. I began to identify their needs and using a research training skill I acquired, I conducted a focus group discussion and the outcome of that focus group made me introduce a Saturday breakfast meeting where every Saturday, the people had a singing and fellowship session, an exercise class, full English breakfast (hot meal) and finally they go home with their food parcel. This has greatly improved the physical and mental well-being of the people.”

Franklin Akpomuvwe - Community Health Ambassador

Championing health through the Community Health Ambassadors Programme

What difference did this make?

- Through the collaborations with the Public Health outreach van, there was increased opportunities for people to get the Vital 5 health checks within faith settings which includes advice and information on health eating, blood pressure, mental health, smoking and alcohol dependency.
- Community activities such as Dance Therapy health workshops and sewing workshops positively impacted attendees mood, reduced stress levels, and increased feelings of empowerment and self-confidence. Some began making their own clothes or expressed interest in starting their own businesses through the use of these new skills, in addition to increased self-expression, and community connection to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.



Do you feel inspired?

We are always looking for new Ambassadors, so please get in touch today. Sign up [here](#) to become a Community Health Ambassador



“In my year as a part-time ambassador, I’ve witnessed first-hand the power of advocacy and community engagement in driving positive change. Through dedicated efforts and collaboration, I’ve had the privilege of contributing to impactful initiatives aimed at promoting health and well-being including tackling health inequality. From empowering individuals with vital skills to fostering strategic partnerships, every interaction has reinforced the importance of collective action in advancing our shared goals. As I reflect on my journey, I am inspired by the resilience and passion of those I’ve had the honour of working alongside. Moving forward, I am committed to leveraging these learnings and experiences to continue making a meaningful difference in my role as a health ambassador Champion.”

Saidat Oketunde - Community Health Ambassador

Supporting those waiting for appointments

From our signposting and feedback data, we found out that many people are experiencing long waiting times to receive an appointment from their GP, dentist or hospital

“My son cannot access dental treatment. He's been referred by the GP (Dulwich Medical Centre) three times, I haven't received any letters, the GP said the referral has definitely gone through, but Lister dentist say they have not received it. I was told anyone with an NHS email can make a referral. (My son) has many cavities and is in pain. It has been over a year. My other son (who has SEN) was seen within a month.” Quote via outreach event.

As a result of what was shared with us:

We handled it by following up with the individual and signposted them to POhWER as well as escalating directly to PALS. We have since reached out to London Dental Confederation and Community Dental Services to establish a route for feedback and escalation for future cases.

Engaging organisations that assist people during the cost of living crisis.

Share The Cost Global hosted our coffee morning which invited local residents, other community organisations and public bodies to learn more about the services each other offer, build relationships and understand collaborative ways of working.

From this we have:

- Been strengthening our relationship with the team at Share The Cost Global
- Understood their services and promote the support on offer to local residents, businesses and stakeholders
- Established a referral pathway for non-statutory advocacy support, to ensure local residents do not slip through the net



Healthwatch Southwark's relationship with Share The Cost Global has enabled us to seek advice for a specific case where a mother had given feedback about multiple issues she was experiencing, such as financial issues, concerns she has raised about her adult child with additional needs and overcrowding in her small home that she shares with her 4 children.

After hearing the difficulties this mother was experiencing we signposted her to Share The Cost Global, a range of financial aid services, housing advice, health and social care services in addition to practical support to help with form filling.



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, making 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 from sources that people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need the most such as practical help to fill in forms
- Build relationships with local services by understanding their remit and referral pathways
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis

Challenging digital-first services for older people

It's essential that people have clear, accurate communication about their care and can choose the method of communication that best suits them and their needs.

Thanks to the efforts of Healthwatch Southwark, a GP surgery have reviewed their telephone prompts to enable patients to request an appointment over the phone which reduced digital exclusion for many patients on their register. Healthwatch Southwark will encourage more primary care providers to implement this where the option to book an appointment over the phone is not available.

Digital platforms are becoming more common in healthcare for tasks like booking appointments, especially after the pandemic prompted a review of phone prompts and appointment request options. However, there's a risk of excluding those who are not comfortable with or can't access these services. Healthwatch Southwark heard from 90-year-old Jane*, who has several physical and mental health issues, and couldn't book an appointment for her emotional needs over the phone. Jane* has limited mobility, little family support, and does not have or want to use a smartphone.

She has been passed between mental health services and faced another barrier, feeling distressed by the unwelcoming phone prompts. Jane* called Healthwatch Southwark to report her difficulties, stating that she had called the surgery multiple times and eventually left a voicemail for the GP/practice manager. Healthwatch Southwark raised her concerns with the practice.

*Names changed

I just wanted to thank you for your support. On checking the GP surgery's introductory message, I was pleased and relieved to hear an option to speak to make an appointment. The Practice did not get back to me to tell me this, so I was about to launch another attack... but glad I had the wit to check first.



Making informed decisions with signposting advice and guidance

Challenging a decision regarding your health can be done with equipping individuals with the correct information

Since the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination program, more people suspecting poor health from vaccines have become aware of the Vaccine Damage Payment. We received a request for information about this government scheme from a man providing feedback about someone he cares for.

Healthwatch Southwark wanted to make sure he could get the information he needed and support from services that help with form filling.

- We provided him with trusted sources on the Gov.UK website about the Vaccine Damage Payment programme
- As well as providing him with a variety of local services that provide the practical support he needed, this was accompanied by information about how to make a formal NHS complaint and how he can access local advocacy services



Volunteering

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 communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Shared key health messages to communities who may not always receive the information they need to better their health choices
- Supported us with our project engagement work



My time at Healthwatch Southwark has been worthwhile and looking back to when I started only brings back good memories. I first joined Healthwatch Southwark as a public health master's student. I have always been passionate about health and the ways in which we can address health inequalities.

I also wanted to gain a practical insight into how we address health concerns in my community.

My team at Healthwatch Southwark have been so supportive and were amazing in allowing me to showcase my skills and participate in chosen projects. I was also fortunate to be selected to receive an award for my efforts.

From speaking to the public as part of community engagement, to delivering presentations at stakeholder meetings, Healthwatch Southwark will always have a special place in my heart.

I have grown so much in confidence and I know that all the skills I have gained during my time there would be beneficial for when I transition into my new role as Patient Engagement Facilitator.

I would like to give a special thanks to the entire team. I am truly grateful and I appreciate you all.

**Elishia –
Healthwatch Southwark Volunteer /
Community Health Ambassador**



Community engagement and project research volunteer

Do you feel inspired?



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

 www.healthwatchsouthwark.org

 0203 848 6546

 info@healthwatchsouthwark.org



This project has not only been important on a personal level, it has also been important for the community in general. The presentations that were made in various places with different authorities and representatives of organizations saw for the first time the need and support that the Latino community needs.

This project opened the doors to other organizations to integrate the Latin community more and we have more information in Spanish language now.

Not only did it show us the problem of the language barrier in the Latin community but also in all immigrants, from that came the idea of putting up a flag of origin next to the name of the NHS workers, to try to have better communication.

Personally and as Health Ambassador gave me a voice and made me realize the passion I have for the health inequalities, and with the help of Healthwatch making this survey showed how important it is to try to improve this barrier so that we all try to live in harmony and receive the necessary help to improve our health.

Thanks to Healthwatch for the dedication and effort in carrying out this project.

Patricia Cuenca –
Healthwatch Southwark Volunteer /
Community Health Ambassador



Project volunteer for Access to Health and Social Care Services for Latin American Communities in Southwark.

Read the report [here](#).



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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 Government	£150,720.34	Expenditure on pay	£120,644.01
		Non-pay expenditure	£3,592.76
		Office and management fees	£12,166.04
Total income	£150,720.34	Total expenditure	£136,402.81

Additional income is broken down by:

- £2,000 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project.
- £2,000 received from the local ICS for joint work on a project.
- £800 funding received from a local charity to support their project.

ICS funding

Healthwatch across south east London also receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
a. SEL ICS posts x2 (1.2 fte)	£ 91,500.00
b. South East London Healthwatch Reference Group	
c. Organisational on costs	
	£
	£

Next steps

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. Completing previous years project work and ensure the reports receive 100% formal responses from decision makers in health and social care
2. Using information gathered from our priorities survey, listening tour, themes from liaison meetings and other intelligence to inform our community-led research and projects
3. Increase community engagement, with particular focus on historically underrepresented communities in Southwark and promote the work we have done and will do over 2024-25



Statutory statements

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

Healthwatch Southwark is hosted by Community Southwark

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 Board consists of 8 members who work on a voluntary basis 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 2023/24, the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as the new Healthwatch Southwark strategy for 2023–26 and project direction for our Latin American access to health services. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities through our annual survey, feedback and signposting themes and trends and stakeholder intelligence.

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 2023/24, we have been available by phone, email, web form on our website and social media. This is in addition to attending meetings of influence within statutory services, alongside community groups and forums.

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, share with our statutory and community stakeholders in our newsletters and on the [South East London Healthwatch](#) webpage.

Responses to recommendations

100% of providers responded to our requests for information or recommendations, therefore we did not have to escalate any concerns to the Healthwatch England Committee.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that have been shared with us. In our local authority area, for example, we take information to the Southwark Health and Wellbeing Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and local commissioners where we presented concerns about receiving formal responses to our research reports.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the South East London Integrated Care System. For example, we produce an integrated report of all SEL Healthwatch reports published every quarter, which is shared widely. In addition, we provide updates on Healthwatch activity to the ICB Engagement Assurance Committee and to the System and Concerns Group. Our SEL Healthwatch Reference Group has influenced the Digital Strategy and the Anchor System Programme engagement. 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 did not make any Enter and View visits due to several changes to staff and our priorities. We aim to re-start our Enter and View programme and re-train representatives during 2024-25.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Southwark is represented on the Southwark Health and Wellbeing Board by Sheona St Hilaire, Chair of the Healthwatch Southwark Advisory Board. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by sharing important updates with the core Healthwatch Southwark team, sharing best practice information and health related information that our ambassadors can provide to their communities.

Healthwatch Southwark is represented on the South East London Integrated Care Partnership, ICS Information Governance Group, ICS Quality and Performance Committee, ICS System Quality Group, and ICS Digital Board by Folake Segun, Director, South East London Healthwatch. Folake Segun and Graham Head, Vice Chair Healthwatch Southwark, represent the Healthwatch in south east London on the CS Data Usage Committee.

2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Black mental health	We have begun re-engaging the community and steering group to review the project scope
Holding to account process	We have refined our holding to account process to ensure health and social care services implement the recommendations from our findings through facilitating 6 and 12 month reviews with community members and statutory services. We have had good feedback from services who have piloted the process so far
Re-establishing our connection with Social Care	This has enabled us to have regular liaison meetings to provide our insights and intelligence relating to feedback we receive about adult and child social care services
Rebuilding our connection with Primary Care Network	This has enabled us to join regular liaison meetings to provide our insights and intelligence relating to feedback we receive about primary care services

healthwatch

Southwark




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