

Together

healthwatch
Bexley

**we are making health
and social care better**

Annual Report 2022–23



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"In the last 10 years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

Message from our Chair

As the Chair of Healthwatch Bexley Advisory Board, I am proud to present our annual report, showcasing our commitment to community engagement and improving health and social care services for Bexley residents. Over the past year, we have continued to actively listen to our local community, ensuring people's voices are heard and valued.

This year, recruiting staff has been a challenge at times, and we have had a number of staff changes. However, we now have a new Healthwatch Manager, Simone Kerr, a Bexley resident who comes with a wealth of experience of local primary care services, including dentistry. Simone has hit the ground running and has started to build excellent local networks and develop partnerships.

Simone has supported the development of the Bexley Health and Wellbeing Strategy, engaging with over 1,200 individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including young people, carers, community groups, and elders, among others, to ensure their unique perspectives were captured.

Furthermore, we have continued working to ensure our local community is heard at the Integrated Care Systems level. Collaborating with other South East London Healthwatch organisations, we have effectively influenced decisions taken by Integrated Care Boards and Partnerships, ensuring local needs are prioritised in shaping healthcare provision.



Rikki Garcia
Healthwatch Bexley Chair



“As the health and social care system increasingly moves to regional decision making, it is more important than ever that the voices of Bexley residents are sought, listened to and amplified. With your ongoing support, Healthwatch Bexley can continue make this happen.”

About us

Healthwatch **Bexley** is your local health and social care champion.

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.

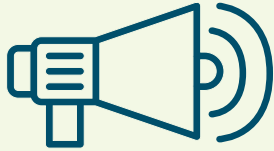


Our values are:

- **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



2,500 people

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

1,505 people

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

Making a difference to care

We published

1 report

about the improvements people would like to see to the outpatient appointments for Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

5

outstanding volunteers who gave up **over 600 hours** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

100,000

which is **the same as the** previous year.

We currently employ

2 staff

who help us carry out our work.



How we've made a difference this year

Spring



When residents didn't know how to access their GP after Covid, we suggested better GP communication was needed.



We worked with Ukrainian refugees ensuring they had access to local health and social care services

Summer



We worked with local partners on Bexley's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment ensuring patient voice helped to inform decisions.



We supported the National #BecauseWeAllCare campaign which saw 54,000 people come forward to tell us about issues they faced with services.

Autumn



Teaming up with Healthwatch Lewisham and Bromley we looked at the experience of residents using local outpatient services.



Our team of volunteers visited local hospitals speaking to people about their visit.

Winter



We visited libraries, community groups and local charities to find out what is working well and what could be improved.



Through Healthwatch England we urged the Government to act after reporting a 452% increase in people struggling to see an NHS dentist.

10 years of improving care

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

How have we made care better, together?

Vaccine confidence

Our research exploring vaccine confidence with people from different backgrounds provided vital insight for Public Health Bexley helping to inform their public health campaigns and improve vaccine uptake.



Young peoples' emotional wellbeing

Our research found that many young people were unaware of services such as Headscape and Kooth. We helped raise awareness by speaking to over 14,000 young people.



Digital Inclusion

We worked with local partners to ensure those without digital access were not forgotten. Digital trainers were commissioned to help improve the digital skills of local residents.



GP Access

After Covid, ways to access a GP changed causing patient confusion. Patients were waiting for practices to return to pre-covid ways of working. We highlighted the need for improved communication between patients and Primary Care, so that patients were aware of the 'new normal'.



Look and Listen

Working with Mencap and Advocacy For All's Speaking-Up Group, we helped improve GP access for people with a learning disability. Mencap also received funding to provide disability awareness training locally.



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.

Positive changes to patient experience at Lewisham And Greenwich Trust outpatient appointments

In 2022, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust (LGT) commissioned Healthwatch in Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham to jointly deliver an extensive engagement programme to understand the experience of patients using LGT outpatients services. The six-week engagement focused on access and communication. Healthwatch Lewisham lead on the project and a joint report was written, with 217 of the 905 people we spoke to living in Bexley.

Our recommendations included:

Improved telephone access to outpatient departments is needed, including improving the automated service as well as through providing clear information about how to reach relevant departments.

Review contact methods to ensure they are suitable for patients with sensory disabilities. This should be done in conjunction with the Trusts' Accessible Information Standard policy and process.

Improve systems to allow patients who call to rearrange or cancel their appointments.

Services should consider patient availability when offering appointment slots. For example consideration should be given to unpaid carers who have caring responsibilities.

What difference will this make?

Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust is developing an action plan based on the recommendations made in our report. The Healthwatch Lewisham lead is co-signing the action plan with various department heads based on the feedback from our visits and what you told us about your experiences.



“Appointment letter turned up after the appointment. Hard to get in touch via phone and didn't hear after the appointment.”

“Location changed without me knowing from G to B, nobody told me I was waiting in the wrong area.”

“We found the hospital hard to navigate, the signs are okay but could be clearer.”

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

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

Working with Public Health Bexley to find out what is important to you



Hearing about personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides Public Health Bexley with a better understanding of what is working well and what may need improving in the Borough.

We regularly work with the Public Health Team sharing your feedback to help inform local health and wellbeing policies, strategies and Needs Assessments.

You told us it is not easy to find out what is available locally, so we are working with partners to provide a directory of local services, charities and support.

Getting services to involve the public



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

We worked with Lewisham and Greenwich Hospital Trust and other local Healthwatches to explore people's experience of booking and attending outpatient appointments.

The Trust is working with Healthwatch to look at how the outpatient appointment system may be improved.

Improving care over time



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

Over the years, Healthwatch Bexley has regularly worked with local GPs and Primary Care to raise awareness of the issues people face trying to access their GP. Especially the changes made to accessing a GP during and post Covid.

Communication was found to be a concern between Primary Care and local residents. To improve this, there is now a dedicated Primary Care communications person.



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:

- Attending an event organised to help Ukrainian refugees
- Visited food banks, Job Centres and a Gypsy & Traveller site
- Worked with local partners to hear the views of the homeless
- Regularly engaged with faith groups, local Community Champions and charities



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 is finding an NHS dentist, learning how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we have helped people by:

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

Help to find dental care in Bexley

Healthwatch Bexley regularly have people contact them for advice and information on dental services. The public tell us that most practices were not taking on new patients, and that some had long waiting lists. We compiled a list of any practices taking on new NHS patients and update this regularly.

“Thank you for helping me to find a dentist when I moved in to the area. My family are now all registered and we have an appointment next week.”

Daniella, Bexley resident

Healthwatch Bexley’s advice and information has meant people who need urgent treatment know their options and have clear information.

“Thank you for helping me to understand how to get an urgent dentists appointment for my toothache.”

Mike, Bexley resident



Do you feel inspired?

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

 www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk

 **0208 304 9344**

 info@healthwatchbexley.co.uk



Volunteering

We are supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we are able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote Healthwatch Bexley and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out regular visits to libraries and hospitals
- Reviewed GP and dentist websites to review accessibility
- Collected the most up-to-date information on changes to services, such as whether NHS dental appointments were available at a practice

Finances 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 Bexley Council	£100,000	Expenditure on pay	£55,310
Additional income	£7,398	Other operational costs	£28,899
Total income	£107,398	Total expenditure	£84,209

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£4,000 funding** received from Healthwatch England for Bexley Winter comms engagement work
- **£979 funding** received from Healthwatch England for web migration
- **£2,419 funding** from Bexley Council for Additional Covid Specific Streams

Next steps

In the 10 years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue collecting feedback from our local community and amplifying voices to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work in tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care.

Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Reviewing the experiences of local people trying to access NHS dentists.
2. Highlighting the impact of the cost of living on access to services.
3. Looking at the low take-up of cancer screening in the borough.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Bexley, 2a Devonshire Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 8DS. **Healthwatch Bexley is hosted by Mind in Bexley.**

Healthwatch Bexley 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 10 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met twice and made decisions on matters such as staffing issues and our work plan.

We also 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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of 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 www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk, via social media and hard copies will be available for those who need them.

Taking people's experiences to decision makers

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

In our local authority area for example we take information to Public Health Bexley, Primary Care and Adult Social Care.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers such as South East London Integrated Care System. We have a dedicated South East London Healthwatch representative who attends meetings on behalf of all South East London Healthwatch.

We regularly attend the local Health and Wellbeing Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

healthwatch

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