



Our impact: Communities

1,367 people shared their experience of health and care with us

We've supported communities:

- Sharing the concerns of the fishing community around medical fitness requirements.
- Engaged residents of Lewes Prison to capture their experiences of health, care and wellbeing.
- Supported ethnically diverse communities, including asylum seekers, to navigate NHS, care and community services.
- Developed accreditation to support us to be CYP friendly.
- Used our Listening Tour, Engage and Inspire shows and networking to hear voices across our area.

Building Better Health and Care

Healthwatch East Sussex
Annual Event 2024

healthwatch
East Sussex

Annual Event 2024

Your Voice Counts

Our 2024 Annual Event took place on the 18th of July at The View Hotel, Eastbourne.

It was great to see so many people in attendance, including members of the public and our colleagues from statutory and voluntary organisations.

We heard from a number of colleagues about the importance of public and patient voice in building better health and care, and how their organisations had and were using feedback and insight to shape their activity.

We had **six** key speakers who responded to our theme of *'Building Better Health and Care'*:

Peter Aston, Deputy Head of Joint Commissioning, Integration and Health & Wellbeing, [NHS Sussex](#)

Kira Parsons, Engagement Officer, [East Sussex Community Voice](#) (& [Healthwatch East Sussex](#))

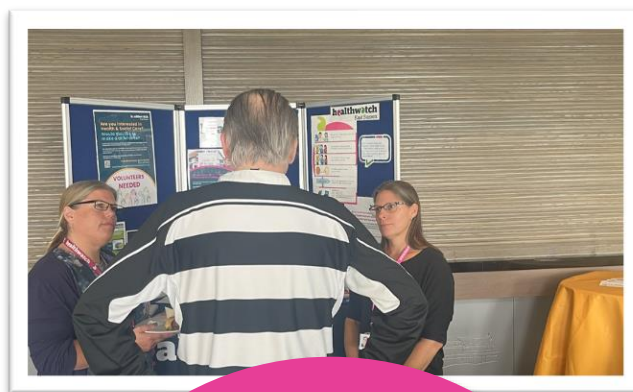
Janet Springate, [Healthwatch East Sussex](#) Volunteer

Matthew Ryan, Engagement Manager, [East Sussex Community Voice](#) (& [Healthwatch East Sussex](#))

Sarah Russell, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care & Health, [East Sussex County Council](#)

Josh Broadway, Programme Manager for Integrated Community Teams, [East Sussex County Council](#)

Copies of the speaker presentations can be downloaded on the [Healthwatch East Sussex website here](#).



Over **50**
people attended the
event, including
members of the public
and our colleagues from
statutory and voluntary
organisations.

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Discussion Groups

Following the speakers' presentations, we hosted a discussion session exploring the theme of 'Building Better Health and Care'. Our groups discussed the following themes and questions:

1. Social determinants of health
2. What does integration mean to you?
3. How can awareness and understanding of Adult Social Care be improved?

Attendees had the opportunity to contribute to all three questions and themes during the session. The points raised have been collated and are summarised on the following pages.

1. Social determinants of health activity

We asked participants to consider how the social determinants of health affect people living in East Sussex. A social determinant of health is any non-medical factor, such as socioeconomic status, education, neighbourhood, and physical environment that influences an individual's health outcomes.

The session explored three aspects:

Looking at the **social determinants of health**, think about how these might affect the health and wellbeing of people living in East Sussex.

- One of the big impacts on local people is the disparity in the South East across services and the provision people receive/have access to.
- Access to transport – whether it be impacted by socioeconomic factors, or someone's physical environment – is crucial for accessing services and maintaining health and wellbeing.
- Cost of living impacts on everything – food, transport, heating, mental health.
- The social determinants focus on family networks but wider community networks (or the lack of) have a huge impact on wellbeing.
- There is an assumption that everyone has broadband and a good signal; there is also a misconception that everyone is digitally capable which can lead to people being isolated.
- Housing has a huge impact on people's health and wellbeing, with rising costs of housing and the scarcity of properties making things harder for people.
- The rurality of some areas in our county can lead to loneliness and isolation and make it harder for people to access health, care and support services.
- Divisions between providers mean divisions in information provided.
- The infrastructure of local services can make it difficult to access care. If buildings are not set up correctly.

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What services or support structures do you know of in East Sussex which help to mitigate these issues?

- Voluntary sector organisations and their volunteers play a huge role in the community. The co-working approach adopted by local VCSE has been vital to the work that they can achieve.
- The focus of organisations can often be on 'empowering people' but sometimes people are not in the right place or have the skills to help themselves.
- A public campaign approach demonstrated by '*Make loneliness everyone's business*' can have an impact on and reach a range of audiences.
- Social care support such as Direct Payments and the Disabled Facilities Grant can help with impacts on all aspects of the determinants of health.
- Local community supermarkets and cafes provide social support and wider community information where it is needed.

What more can we do to support individuals and communities who are most affected by the social determinants of health?

- Better up-front information regarding the cost of living is needed, as no one organisation is responsible for information sharing.
- Better information sharing through a variety of means, from the screens in medical centres to noticeboards. There should be a place for both physical and online information, with consideration paid to rural communities who are often cut off.
- It is important to look back and learn from previous models that have been implemented and not try to reinvent.
- When considering services, think about what's available locally and practically in terms of where people live and where they can get to.
- Within health care more focus needs to be placed on the concept of treating the person and not the disease and ensuring that care is person-centric.
- Clear and understandable information and signposting to young people to provide early support and intervention.
- Other practical suggestions included:
 - Introducing legislation to limit ultra processed food to help remove strain on healthcare services.
 - Designing an education programme around building community networks with a focus on giving back to community.
 - The potential of a befriending scheme to provide support and fill the gaps in family/social support.

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Discussion Groups

2. What does integration mean to you?

- Only having to tell your story once, rather than having to repeat it to every new individual in the care system that you encounter.
- Joined-up services via referrals or one service being able to make appointments for an individual in another part of the service – organisations pro-actively talking to each other to enable seamless journeys for patients and service users with minimal barriers.
- Clearly defining responsibilities so that the onus doesn't fall on patients to navigate the system for themselves. Patients should not need to know how the system works – it should just work.
- Identifying the gaps and then plugging the gaps – for instance transition between children's services and adult services, care when physical and mental health overlaps, what happens when a patient is discharged from a service.
- Enabling data sharing to take place so that information can be shared between services and different parts of the system.
- Tracking the patient care pathway, so that an individual is tracked across the whole system to ensure that holistic care is received.
- Integration between GP practices and pharmacies on prescriptions, including home delivery services for prescriptions.
- GPs having direct links with adult social care.
- Services being available to access in community settings.
- Transport being available to get to and between services and settings across the region.
- Building relationships within the system to learn and share information, address capacity and resource issues, and create a less disjointed system. This will take time and will need co-ordinating.
- Making every contact count – not just in the NHS and social care but in the voluntary sector too.
- Seeing the voluntary and community sector as part of the system.

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Discussion Groups

3. How can awareness and understanding of Adult Social Care be improved?

- People often don't understand what social care is, who provides what, and the difference between health services (the NHS) and social care.
- People often don't know how to access adult social care if/when they need it. Points of access should be community based and awareness needs to be raised of what those access points are, whether that's via GPs or local councils.
- Other services and professionals need to be more knowledgeable themselves about adult social care so that they can signpost or refer people to the relevant service.
- It's important that information isn't only available online, as not everyone can access the internet.
- Routes to raising awareness of adult social care could be through local newsletters and magazines, online via social media, leaflets distributed to GP surgeries and libraries, display screens in GP waiting rooms and hospitals, advertising on TV and radio.
- Face-to-face information is also valuable for raising awareness; adult social care workers undertaking outreach and public engagement alongside NHS colleagues or others in the community and via schools could reach large numbers of people.
- Many people do not self-identify as having a social care need and there is a need to destigmatize adult social care needs and social care services.
- More positive stories need to be shared about how adult social care can help people.
- The system needs to work to identify how to reach and how best to communicate with seldom heard groups, to ensure that awareness is raised amongst all groups.
- When people do try to access support, it needs to be clear who they should expect support from – a single point of contact may be useful to support people whose care crosses between teams and services so that the individual or their carer are not having to navigate a complicated system for themselves.

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Next Steps

1. We will share what we have heard with key partners, including local healthcare providers and commissioners to highlight the importance of keeping patient voice at the heart of decision making.
2. We will use what we have heard to shape our priority setting and project planning moving forward.
3. Healthwatch East Sussex will use the learning from this event to inform our future events and engagement activity.
4. Healthwatch will continue to raise awareness of our role amongst communities across East Sussex, so that more people are aware of what we offer and the impact we have. This will include attending events and local venues to reach out to as many residents as possible.



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Feedback From Attendees

"Always enjoy hearing about what is being worked on. Great to meet other people"

"Very informative and also feel that we were listened to in the discussion groups."

"... interesting variety of speakers, facilitated conversations produced a lot of feedback and ideas."

"Interesting speakers and content. Engaging workshops. Good networking."

"Great to learn about HWES achievements and ambitions 2023 – 2024"

"[most useful] Learning about Young Healthwatch because it's so important to engage youth and improve their experiences."

"Fully informed me in what Healthwatch does and has been doing and plans for the coming year. Passionate and informative presentations by staff."

"I enjoyed hearing other peoples' views and also airing my experiences as an 81 year old."

"Good presentations, lively round table sessions."



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East Sussex

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