

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Croydon
Annual Report 2021-22



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Croydon is your local health and social care champion. From GPs and hospital services to social care, dentistry and community services, we make sure NHS leaders and other 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

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.



Sir Robert Francis QC,
Chair of Healthwatch
England



"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."



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“Our partnership working has been invaluable, particularly the incredible support to our Urgent and Emergency Care programme. The insights gathered put patients at the heart of the discussions in our working groups to allow us to come up with a model that worked best for local populations.” **See page 9**

“The contribution of the wonderful patients you recruited for the focus group has been invaluable...the patients gave informed thoughtful and constructive feedback. We made lots of changes to the London General Practice Guide.” **See page 13**

Healthwatch Croydon helped the CQC to gather rich and reliable insights from these communities in accessible formats which will be valuable in shaping the CQC’s regulatory work.” **See page 21**

“I volunteered at Healthwatch Croydon because I admire how they ensure that people’s views on care are heard and that improvements are made where possible” **See page 26**

Meet our team and board

Healthwatch Croydon is delivered by four members of staff and supported by a local leadership board comprised of Croydon residents and others with a commitment to the borough.

Our team



(Left to right in photograph)

Jeet Sandhu, Communications Lead
Gordon Kay, Healthwatch Croydon Manager
Robyn Bone, Volunteer and Partnerships Lead
Yinka Faponle, Engagement Lead

Our local leadership board

Edwina Morris (Chair)
Martin Faiers (Deputy Chair)
Olusina Adeniyi
Pat Knight
Michael Lawal
Anantha Ramaswamy

Healthwatch Croydon and Help & Care

Help & Care hold the contract for Healthwatch service for Croydon, which is commissioned by Croydon Council. Local leadership board members have been selected through an open recruitment process and are Croydon residents or those with a commitment to the borough. They bring a wide experience and knowledge of health and care services. Emma Leatherbarrow as Director of Partnerships at Help & Care is a member of the board. Gordon Kay is the operational manager and also attends the board.

Message from our chair

This last year has seen Healthwatch Croydon respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and look beyond to ensure resident and patient insight has impact.

In April 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic was still a major concern, with many people experiencing COVID related bereavement. There were significant pressures on health and social care services, with periodic lockdowns and social distancing still with us.

Fortunately, the COVID-19 vaccine programme was underway, although uptake monitoring had revealed stark differences. Some people with poorer health outcomes were less likely to be vaccinated. We worked with statutory and voluntary organisations to identify how best to communicate with different communities, (see page 24) and carried out a survey on views about the COVID-19 vaccine(see page 20) to identify more insight to help commissioners.

Later, together with Healthwatch organisations across South West London, we collected insight from people affected by Long COVID (page 19). We provided information to commissioners about the difficulties people experienced and made recommendations about how services could support people better.

Reaching people has been a challenge. By working in partnership with providers, they were able to contact people on their lists so that we could seek people's views via direct text messaging. We have used this to gather information from GP patients (page 22), and from people who have experienced urgent and emergency care services (page 14) - the latter providing hundreds of responses in a matter of days.

There have only been rare short periods when it was safe to carry out face-to-face interviews that had previously provided rich insight into individual people's experiences of health and care services. However, we have looked at ways to gain this insight through online focus groups and interviews. With the Healthy London Partnership we arranged an online focus group to talk with a diverse group of Croydon residents about their views on a draft GP access guide (page 13). We also held an online focus group to gather information on the experiences of seldom heard people, including those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (page 21).

(continued on page 6)



E. Morris

Edwina Morris
Healthwatch Croydon Chair

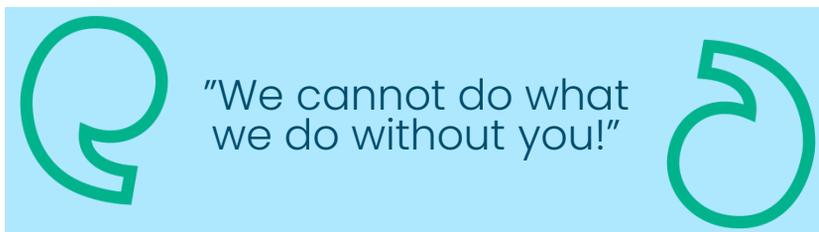


"Reaching people has been a challenge. By working in partnership with providers, they were able to contact people on their lists so that we could seek people's views via direct text messaging."



Message from our chair

When Age UK Croydon commissioned us to gather views of people who had received the Personal Independence Co-ordinator service (page 17) we arranged for trained staff from our Healthwatch Hub to ring and speak to each person, recording their words for later analysis.



When deciding which projects to take forward, we focus on important issues where we can make a difference. For example, at our 2020 Annual Meeting attendees raised concerns about lack of access to NHS dentistry. We liaised with Local Dental Committee members, ran an online survey and analysed dental practice websites during 2021 (page 15).

Finally, our staff and board members use information gleaned from our project work to represent local people's views to senior managers, clinicians and councillors at a range of boards, committees and groups in Croydon.

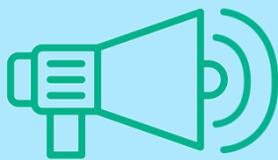
I would like to say thank you to our dedicated team and board and volunteers for their significant contribution, and to all health and social care stakeholders for listening and responding. And most importantly thank you to all those Croydon residents and patients for sharing your views and experiences – we cannot do what we do without you!



Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



1,712 people

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

1,344 people

regularly receive our monthly newsletter and other occasional updates on what is happening in health and social care in Croydon and further afield.

Making a difference to care



We published

nine reports

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

Our most wide-reaching project was the

GP Access Guide Focus Group

which highlighted the challenges around access and supported the development of a good practice guide sent to 1,200 London GPs.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

20 outstanding volunteers, who gave up **809.5 hours**

equal to **108 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by Croydon Council. In 2021-22 we received:

£151,618 which is **14% less than the previous year.**

We did win **£14,666** from key stakeholders through competitive bids for projects or negotiating for funding.

We also currently employ

four staff (two full time and two four days per week)

who carry out this work working with board members and volunteers. No change on the 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



Contributing to Healthwatch England engagement project, we received views from Croydon residents on the COVID-19 vaccine [see page 20](#).



Asked people to have their say on accessing and using dental services and finding information on dental websites [see page 15](#).

Summer



Ran an online survey via text to understand the journey of those who arrived at Croydon University Hospital Accident and Emergency/ Urgent Care receiving 1,038 responses [see page 14](#).



We ran a focus group on the primary care aspects of Croydon's Health and Care plan refresh and gained insight to shape aspects of the plan around Patient Participation Groups [see page 16](#).

Autumn



We interviewed 64 Personal Independence Coordinator service users to contribute to a wider evaluation of a flagship project of the One Croydon Alliance [see page 17](#).



We heard French Africans, Hondurans, Tamil and Ukrainians tell us about language barriers in using services for Healthwatch England's 'Your Care Your Way' campaign [see page 18](#).

Winter



We co-presented with the Healthy London Partnership at Healthwatch London Network the work we had done with them to improve GP access across the capital [see page 13](#).



We raised profile of the importance of patient participation at the Proactive and Preventative Care Board in response to focus group feedback on Croydon's Health and Care plan refresh [see page 16](#).

What our stakeholders say

While independent of all health and social care services, we work closely with our stakeholders to provide insight that can impact change based on what you tell us as Croydon residents. Here are some comments from stakeholders:



“As Croydon begins to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthwatch has continued to help us to listen to the needs of our community. As we start to rebuild, reaching more deeply into our communities, particularly those experiencing health inequalities, has been more important than ever. Our partnership working has been invaluable, particularly the incredible support to our Urgent and Emergency Care programme. The insights gathered put patients at the heart of the discussions in our working groups to allow us to come up with a model that worked best for local populations. As we continued to roll out the biggest vaccine programme the NHS has ever delivered, Healthwatch were so helpful in sharing information on our behalf and reporting back on how residents felt about the vaccine. I’d like to extend my thanks to Healthwatch Croydon for another year working together to improve health and care for people living in our borough.”



Dr Angelo Fernandes, Chair at NHS Croydon Borough, NHS South West London Clinical Commissioning Group



“The priority for our integrated system of health, care and the community and voluntary sector is to improve outcomes for residents in Croydon. Our Healthwatch Croydon partners are a key part of this, and working with them we are able to hear, through their informative reports, the experiences of our residents when accessing health and care. As a system, we can integrate these findings into any transformative programmes of work. Our Croydon Council Adult Social Care & Health strategy shows our commitment to listening to the Resident Voice, building long lasting relationships through strengths based operational and commissioning practice. As we move into a recovery phase following the COVID-19 pandemic and as a council move our focus to transformation, Healthwatch Croydon’s connection with our communities is invaluable and I look forward to a continued strong working relationship with our colleagues at Healthwatch Croydon.”



Annette McPartland, Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, Croydon Council

What our stakeholders say



“As local councillors, we are acutely aware that as a Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, we don't have the resources to undertake the scale of consultation with Croydon's residents needed to gain meaningful insight into their patient experience. Our performance has been immeasurably improved by the research that Healthwatch has undertaken and published over the last year. In particular, their insight into the patient's experience of the local NHS, which their Co-optee brings to the committee, strengthens our accountability role.”

Clr Sean Fitzsimons, Chair of Croydon Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee



“Throughout the year, our work with Healthwatch Croydon has continued to grow in strength and prominence. As a critical friend, they have helped us to stay focused on what our patients say and feel about our care. As an active member of our public Board meetings, they have also made sure the voice of our patients and local community is heard to guide the decisions we take and the plans we make to enhance our services for the borough. Looking forward, there are big changes to how the NHS is run, with the establishment of Integrated Care Systems taking on new health and care statutory responsibilities from 1 July 2022. Healthwatch Croydon will be one of seven place based partners, that will include the Trust, the local authority, mental health services and voluntary services to work together to ensure local people can receive the best care possible.”

Matthew Kershaw, Croydon Health Services NHS Trust Chief Executive and Place Based Leader for Health



Our plans for 2022-23

An overview on our plans and thoughts on the year ahead.

COVID-19 may not be affecting our day-to-day lives in quite the way it was during the last two summers, but its impact on services and patients is still very profound. Add to this the biggest redesign of health and social care services since Healthwatch was formed and there is much to focus on. While the new Integrated Care System (ICS) helps bring commissioners, providers and services into one system, most residents want to know what this will mean for services in Croydon, or their neighbourhood, and our focus will always be here.

Through all of this change, we have not moved from our core aims of improving health and care services by providing feedback from residents and focusing on areas where we feel we can make a difference. We aim to keep our ear to the ground to feedback what matters to you with more face-to-face opportunities such as regular outreach, events and meetings.

We also take our responsibility for representing views at key boards, meetings and groups seriously. Our focus this year will be on the following areas:

- Working with local schools to ask 11 to 16 year olds about mental health needs and service experience to provide insight for commissioners.
- Assessing GP websites to see if they meet patient expectations, and provide consistent and relevant information, particularly around registration.
- Asking those with dementia, and those who care for them, about their experience of services to help develop a new Croydon Dementia Strategy.
- Hearing from patients their experience of discharge from hospital and how they are being supported to recovery to help improve this key service.
- Finding people with health inequalities who are usually seldom listened to, asking them about their experiences, and raising their profile of their needs to inform service responses.

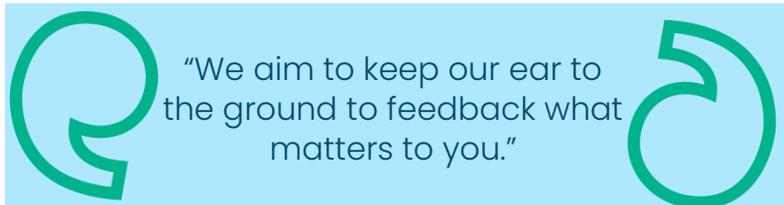
Our work does not end with publication of reports. We will still be working with dentists on raising the profile of local need, as well as supporting development in local neighbourhood services through localities and Integrated Care Networks. The significance of the new ICS will see us working closely with our South West London Healthwatch and others to represent your views.

So please keep in touch and tell your views and experiences – your voice counts!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Kay".

Gordon Kay
Healthwatch Croydon Manager



"We aim to keep our ear to the ground to feedback what matters to you."

Listening to your experiences

Your views are essential for services to improve. That's why it is our priority to listen to feedback from all areas of the community. By understanding your experiences we can share them with services to help them improve.



Supporting better GP Access across London

We were commissioned by the Healthy London Partnership to provide patient insight into access and experience to help inform good practice for 1,200 GPs.

We held a diverse focus group where patients reviewed proposed guidance and gave their views to improve access to GPs. Patients were representative of refugee and asylum seeking communities as well as long-term Croydon residents, carers, parents and those with physical and mental health conditions.

The Healthy London Partnership got to hear first hand the experiences and challenges that patients had in accessing and using GP services.

The main themes that emerged were around waiting for appointments, trust, self care and risk, access to registration and the documents required, use of interpreters in appointments, and discrimination, privacy and dignity.

We made the following recommendations:

- Take a personal approach; provide better information; give effective language support in translation and interpretation for refugees and asylum seekers; utilise technology; understanding your community; and relevant training for staff.

The full report and transcript can be viewed here . [GP-Access-Guide-Focus-Group-September-2021-final.pdf \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](#)



“The contribution of the wonderful patients you recruited for the focus group has been invaluable...the patients gave informed thoughtful and constructive feedback. We made lots of changes to the London General Practice Guide.”

Sian Howell, GP and Clinical Lead for Access, Transforming Primary Care Team, Healthy London Partnership, NHS England.



What difference did this make?

Our work strengthened the guide around the role of carers, the importance of working closely with the community, requirements of practices to provide translating services and prompt care for short-term patients.

Each of 1,200 London GP's was given a copy of the London General Practice Guide, which was supported by a series of webinars for the GPs when the guide was launched in September 2021 . Healthwatch Croydon presented at these webinars You can see the video here: <https://youtu.be/CENaOzmV7rs>

Healthy London Partnership and Healthwatch Croydon presented together at the Healthwatch England London Network to raise the profile of GP access. Other Healthwatches have also taken this subject up in London and there are further discussions planned on how we can work together at a London level to support improvement, particularly in response to changes as a result of COVID-19.

Helping improve urgent and emergency care pathways

We have worked with NHS South West London Clinical Commissioning Group to understand how Croydon University Hospital Accident and Emergency (A&E) patients used the pathway they took and their satisfaction with it.

Through an online survey to all participants who had used our local hospital in the previous six months we received 1,038 responses. This survey looked at the choices people made, what issue led them to urgent care and A&E, and how satisfied they were with the experience. This was compared across various demographics and also against Primary Care Networks of GPs to see if there were any differences.

We found that most people used 111 or called their GP and had a less number of stops before getting to A&E or urgent care than those who used GP Hubs, or pharmacies. Most wanted to be seen quickly or could not get a GP appointment. People with certain illnesses were more likely to use specific urgent care services and pathways and there was also variety across ages. There was also confusion about the multiplicity of services and how they are to be accessed and used. While satisfaction was 62%, this ranged from 50% to 75% across ages, genders, ethnicities and disability.



52% contacted GP or 111

in their pathway to urgent care, but there was significant difference in choice based on age, gender and ethnicity.

Our recommendations:

- Fully integrate pharmacies and GP Hubs into the pathway and create positive communications to give confidence that this is as good as going directly to A&E/Urgent Care or GP.
- Define NHS 111 as the single reliable point of access to direct care via GPs, pharmacies, GP Hubs or A&E/Urgent Care and give it capacity to do the job it needs to do.
- Learn more about how condition and situation may affect choice and reflect that in pathway.
- Understand these services from the user perspective.
- Reduce satisfaction gaps between ages, gender, ethnicity and disability and services in geographic location. Experience needs to be less variable, particularly if coming from different areas of Croydon.

What difference did this make?

This insight has been presented at the Urgent and Emergency Care Transformation Board set up to redesign the pathways in line with patient demand and expectation. A focus on making NHS 111 a reliable first step which allows booking to other services has been influenced in recommissioning of this service. Further developments are being put together by the Croydon Urgent Care Alliance to transform all aspects of the service. The ability to show how patients used pathways and also show that there is a gap in satisfaction between certain demographics provides useful insight to shape services going forward.

Listening to Croydon residents about dentistry and supporting better communication of services

We surveyed residents on their experience and views of dental services and also assessed dental practice websites, working closely with the Croydon Local Dental Committee.

We found variability in access, with patients having difficulty accessing services when they were in pain and a lack of information and confusion on how services are delivered. However, there was significant satisfaction with NHS services once seen. There were also concerns about costs – even with NHS treatment. We also assessed 47 practice websites and found examples of good practice as well as many that could be improved. We are sharing this best practice to help improvement of all NHS dental practice websites in Croydon. Working with the Local Dental Committee has been a very positive experience for both organisations. We learnt much about the complexity of dental commissioning and how this may well affect resident access and usage of the service.



49% found it difficult

to get a dental appointment when there was a problem.

Our recommendations:

- Access needs to be less variable – focus on how it can be commissioned better.
- Undertaking a local needs assessment. The last reallocation of units of dental activity, which affect dentist availability were last set sixteen years ago.
- Understanding the perception of the regular dentist, even though registration does not exist.
- Review allocation of regular check-ups and increase recall period subject to dentist's clinical decision and patient's agreement to free up units of activity in line with National Institute of Clinical Excellence Guidelines.
- Provide better communication about how dentistry is delivered to give residents better insight into services.
- Use best practice on websites to ensure all practices present relevant information to help residents access and use services well.

The full report can be viewed here [Croydon residents experiences of accessing and using NHS dental services \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](https://healthwatchcroydon.co.uk). [Service user experience of dentists' websites in Croydon \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](https://healthwatchcroydon.co.uk)

What difference did this make?

We will be working with the newly formed South West London Local Dental Committee to design materials to inform patients on how services are commissioned and how they can best access services in Croydon. We are also using the insight to raise profile of dental issues to support a strategic needs assessment and wider discussion, particularly as dental commissioning comes under the umbrella of the South West London Integrated Care System.



“We look forward to working with Healthwatch Croydon and other local partners to secure the dental care that Croydon requires and deserves.”

Sushil John, South West London Dental Committee



Supporting the Health and Care Plan refresh

We brought together members of patient participation groups to share views on the proposals for the Primary Care section of the Croydon Health and Care Plan refresh to help shape better integrated services across the borough.

In July 2021, Healthwatch Croydon organised a focus group to provide feedback on the refresh of the Health and Care plan focusing on the Primary Care section. This was a two-hour focus group of a variety of local residents with an interest and experience in this area to gain their insights. We heard that there needed to be clearer communication on objectives and outcomes to increase engagement, including the role of Primary Care Networks (PCNs). There was also a key role for Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) with examples of good practice and a concern that grassroots level organisations in the voluntary and community sectors are not being effectively involved in conversations. There was also a consideration that the volunteer base may not have capacity to meet expectations defined in the plan.



“Within our PCN we are a group of five practices, so we're quite a large PCN. As far as our PPGs go, we actually work together, and there's no reason why other PPGs cannot do that.”

Focus group participant sharing good practice within Croydon.



Our recommendations:

- Provide clearer communication on objective and outcomes to increase engagement and define the role of PCNs in delivering the Health and Care Plan.
- Involve, encourage, and support PPG at both GP and PCN level and apply good practice with PPGs so they know their role.
- Ensure grassroots level micro-organisations in the voluntary and community sector are involved in conversations and don't overestimate volunteers

The full report can be viewed here: [Our reports \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](https://healthwatchcroydon.co.uk)

What difference did this make?

The views from the full transcript have been presented to the One Croydon Alliance of health, social care and voluntary service providers and also presented at the Proactive and Preventive Care Board and Primary Care Commissioning Board. As a result, recognition of the role of PPG groups are now mentioned within the final version of the Health and Care Plan due to be released in July 2022.

Further discussions are continuing through Primary Care Leads in Croydon as part of the South West London Integrated Care System and also with the Local Voluntary Partnership to ensure the community and voluntary sector can meet the expectations of an integrated care system.

Helping the evaluation of Croydon's Personal Independence Coordinator service

We spoke to 64 recent service users about the experience and outcomes for them of a key integrated care service to help shape its future delivery.

Since 2018, the One Croydon Alliance has commissioned Age UK Croydon to deliver the Personal Independence Coordinator (PICS) programme. The clients were previously regular attendees at GPs or hospital services. The aim of this service is to help clients become more independent. Healthwatch Croydon was commissioned by Age UK Croydon to provide independent insight of service user experience of the service as part of a wider evaluation. We spoke to 64 service users through telephone interviews between August and October 2021.

We heard that physical and mental health issues and managing finances were key issues for clients. Once clients had finished the programme, most found that financial issues had improved, and they had support over the physical health issues. Over three quarters saw long term-impact with an increase in confidence for some. However, a third wanted extra support or contact.



78% of those asked had felt some significant long-term impact of PICS some months after the programme finished.

Our recommendations:

- Look at those it did not work for and understand why.
- Extra support once the programme ends.
- Information and communication.

Read the report here: [PICS Evaluation 2021 \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](https://healthwatchcroydon.co.uk)

What difference did this make

From this report, we were able to influence change by informing Age UK and South West London CCG, on the future of the PIC Development Plan. Our recommendations will be included in decision making and there have already been changes implemented with the introduction of a new outcomes tool and additional volunteer support. In addition, there will be more focus on a person-centred approach to the PICS service.



“This Healthwatch survey achieved the objective of gaining the views of clients on the impact of having a PIC and what could be improved as it moved forward. It has enabled the voice of the older person to come through very clearly alongside the detailed evaluation. It helpfully reinforces the detailed recommendations of the independent evaluation.”

Sanjay Gulati, Chief Executive Age UK Croydon



Contributing insight to the Your Care, Your Way campaign

Building on our previous work in accessing service, we were funded to work alongside six other Healthwatch to gather intelligence for a Healthwatch England campaign to review the Accessible Information Standard.

NHS England implemented the Accessible Information standard in 2016 to ensure people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss could communicate effectively with providers.. [NHS England » Accessible Information Standard](#). Recently there is consideration of whether to extend the standard to include those who have language barriers in accessing services by having little or no English language skills.

We carried out structured interviews – all through an interpreter – with French African, Latin Spanish, and Ukrainian speakers and held a focus group with a Tamil community. We interviewed a number of professionals who worked across a range of healthcare settings as well as an interpreters. Our local intelligence was fed back to Healthwatch England who produced this evidence from local Healthwatch findings [Briefing \(healthwatch.co.uk\)](#)

We heard Tamil families say they could not register people at a GP because of language barrier. French African patients felt embarrassed to ask children to interpret health conditions, especially when they did not want family to know. Ukrainian patients not knowing that they could get interpreters and due to language barrier not expressing themselves and therefore keeping their mental health issues inside. Honduran patients feeling powerless because they cannot communicate effectively. This meant the condition got worse and they ended up admitted for a hospital stay via A&E. Somali interpreter says pandemic had made things worse as unable to read patient's body language as meetings are no longer face-to-face.



“They don't respect them and don't try to help. They don't try to help somebody who can't speak the language, they are not moving forward to help. Plus, when they know they can't speak the language it's a difficult attitude.”

Tamil resident in Croydon on their experience of using services



Our initial suggestions:

Our local report will be published in the summer 2022, but initial themes are:

- Need to ensure interpreting and translation services are provided when required.
- Improve information flows between providers to ensure this need is flagged up.
- Improve information and communication about accessing interpreting and translation to ensure patients get the support they need.

What difference did this make

Healthwatch England have made five key recommendations calling for health and social care providers to fully comply with the AIS [Accessible Information Standard – our recommendations | Healthwatch](#). Healthwatch Croydon are analysing the transcripts we made with the aforementioned groups to produce our own local recommendations for Croydon's health and social care providers as well as showing examples of good practice.

Sharing insight on the impact of Long COVID

Working with our colleagues across Healthwatch in South West London we sought views of those experiencing this new condition as a result of having COVID-19 so that patients can be better supported.

Long COVID is an informal term that is commonly used to describe signs and symptoms that continue and develop after an acute infection of COVID. There are a variety of symptoms from breathlessness, brain fog, fatigue and anxiety as well as physical pain all of which last longer than 12 weeks after getting COVID-19. There is no test or clear pathway for Long COVID. This makes the condition tricky to identify and treat and there is a variation among GPs confidence to diagnose.



75% felt their **quality of life** had been affected

Our analysis showed that 33% were still experiencing symptoms 12 months later, 74% said long COVID negatively impacted their mental and emotional health while 53% had not received any help and the same number relied on friends & family. 75% felt their quality of life was affected.

Our recommendations

We suggest developing a better screening process, create better pathways between GPs, consultants, and wider teams, delivering dedicated community support for those with Long COVID. We also suggest focusing on supporting family and friends. Ensure those living on their own get the care they need. More insight is also needed by age, gender, and ethnicity.

What difference will this make?

Healthwatch Croydon is raising the profile of this new condition with all stakeholders in Croydon as well as working with our South West London colleagues to influence change at the Integrated Care System level.

The full report can be viewed here: [Croydon residents' experiences of living with Long Covid \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](https://healthwatchcroydon.co.uk)



“This Healthwatch report is a helpful reminder for the prolonged impact COVID-19 can have. This is something we are acutely aware and one that we are working on to wrap our care and support around people in our community.”

Matthew Kershaw, Croydon Health Services NHS Trust Chief Executive and Place Based Leader for Health.



Gaining insight on Croydon residents' views on the COVID-19 vaccine

We were commissioned to understand public views towards the new COVID Vaccine, as part of a Healthwatch England engagement platform project.

We asked questions about vaccines in general, views on accepting the COVID vaccine, main reasons for wanting it, motivations for refusing it and views on the information received about the vaccine. Most were positive towards the COVID-19 Vaccine and to vaccines in general. Protecting themselves, their family and friends and vulnerable people were the main reasons for wanting the vaccine. However, over one in five respondents were COVID-19 vaccine hesitant with people not trusting the intention behind it, as well as concerns around the safety of the vaccine and its ingredients. Some did not think COVID-19 posed a risk to them. Barriers to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine included booking, distance, and time of appointments/NHS and government websites were seen as best source of information about the COVID vaccine. There were limitations in the sample, on gender, age, and ethnicity in representing the diversity of Croydon, reflective of general online surveys..



Around 1 in 5 were COVID vaccine hesitant with concerns about safety and not trusting the intention. Some also believed that COVID-19 did not pose a risk for them.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure the vaccine is more accessible to all members of the community.
- Communicate the risks against the benefits in a more effective way.
- Continue conversations with those unsure about the vaccine.
- Develop strategies how to reduce the fake and misleading news on the vaccine.
- Wider studies are needed on specific ages, gender, ethnicity, and other demographics.

Read report: [Croydon residents' views on the COVID vaccine \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](https://healthwatchcroydon.co.uk)

What difference did it make

Our report has highlighted key areas where improvements can be made around information dissemination, access to the vaccine and the trust and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccination program. We have already seen NHS Campaigns both locally and nationally to try to help alleviate these concerns for this sub-set of community members. Our report will help local stakeholders find out the general consensus of vaccination programmes and further aid decision making around communication and immunisation rollouts as well as make the case for more focused insight.



“Listening to the voices of our community is central to everything we do. This new Healthwatch Croydon report explores the challenges that have been, and continue to be, at the heart of monumental efforts across the borough to protect people from COVID-19.”

Matthew Kershaw, Place Based Leader for Health, Croydon



Understanding perceptions of the Care Quality Commission from minority communities' perspective

We worked with Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups to listen to their experiences, create case studies and explore their perceptions of the CQC.

We held semi-structured interviews and a focus group and received a letter and gained experiences from five Croydon residents with a broad range of health and social care needs. We spoke with a young person with a long term health condition, a refugee mother who is a carer for her son who has Autism, a woman who is a carer for her elderly parents and sister, an older man who cares for his wife while taking care of himself. We also gained the views of a parent with an adult son in resident care facilities.

We asked these residents what services they use, the challenges they face engaging with services and the CQC, their hopes and fears for health and social care and about changes that they would like to see in the health and social care system.

Our recommendations

We made a number of separate recommendations to the CQC on the basis of each unique case study but themes included communication of the role of the CQC in the complaints process, ways the people can be supported to engage effectively with the CQC, and more clarity around the way it makes decisions, the impact that this may have on provision of services and crucially how this is effectively communicated to the public. You can read the full report, transcripts and recommendations here: [Croydon Black Asian and ethnic minority groups experiences of health and social services and the role of the CQC \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](https://healthwatchcroydon.co.uk)

What difference did this make?

The CQC Public Insight team used this insight to influence. Through the Access Able panel content is tested for accessibility to improve knowledge by working with people who use services. This will improve the accessibility of content and engagement of people who use services. This was also shared with the Transformation team that is developing policies and new ways of working and regulating services. A large part of the Public Engagement strategy focuses on improving our accessibility including the importance of accessibility and alternative formats; clarity of wording; explanations for how to navigate the system; importance of including the voices of carers and family; support useful to help certain groups to share their experiences. Senior leadership see feedback as part of the public engagement insight report.



"The aim of this work was to reach communities that might be called seldom-heard. Healthwatch Croydon helped the CQC to gather rich and reliable insights from these communities in accessible formats which will be valuable in shaping the CQC's regulatory work."

Statement from the Care Quality Commission



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.



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture, through hearing personal experiences, and the impact on people's lives. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone, can challenge assumptions and motivate people to think and work more creatively.

As part of the work we did for the Care Quality Commission (see page 21), we heard from a young woman who had a long-term condition that was not diagnosed for some years because it was rare for her age. This showed the need to be listened to and be believed and for services to be more responsive and understanding.



Getting services to involve the public

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

We worked together with three GP practices in New Addington to provide them feedback from 335 of their patients which was sent via a GP text. We gave them insight on how all their services were received but also on their dedicated patient app so that they could assess how effective it was and make improvements as a result.

Read report at [Experience of patients of Parkway, Fieldway and Headley Drive surgeries \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](https://healthwatchcroydon.co.uk)



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

We have known that dementia care services could be better. We published a report about the experience of dementia carers in 2017. The recently revived Croydon Dementia Action Alliance are now taking on many of the recommendations we suggested. Croydon Health Services in particular have made significant progress in improving services for an increasing population. Much more work still needs to be done and we are working with health and social care stakeholders to help this be realised.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Croydon 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:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19.
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust.
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme.
- Helping people to access the services they need via our dedicated Healthwatch Hub.



Supporting NHS and social care messaging throughout the year

While we are independent of the NHS and social care services, we participate in the Croydon Communications and Engagement Group where we discuss approaches to campaigns and advise from our outsiders' perspective.

Although we did not take a position on whether people should be vaccinated or not, it was our role to help share the information to ensure people have the correct information to make their own decisions. We have continued to do this on a range of campaigns from reducing winter pressures at A&E to where to get help during bank holidays and promoting the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment survey.



Helping and advising on people stuck in the system

There is a real demand for parents and guardians accessing mental health support for their children. A caller wanted advice regarding how to make a complaint to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Her son was referred in June 2021 and since then she reported that she hasn't heard from them nor been provided any support for herself or her son. We advised long waiting lists but the callers complaint is the lack of communication although she did say she has received two letters and some questionnaire texts asking for her son to complete them. We advised that we would send email with some organisations that they could approach for support whilst waiting . Talked through complaint including ideal outcome and suggested it may be best at this stage to speak to PALS initially. Caller expressed thanks for help and for calling back so quickly.



Volunteers

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

This year our volunteers:

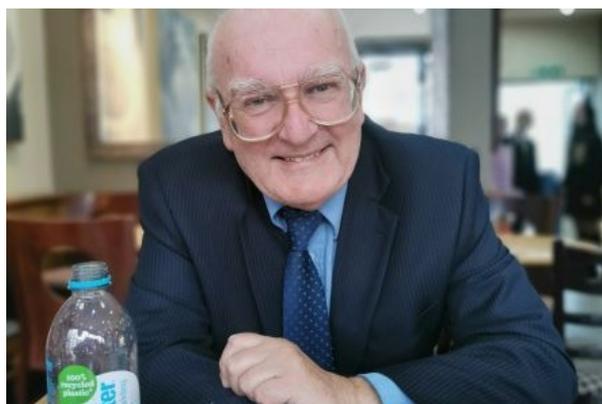
- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys online and later on with some outreach occasions when it was safe to do so..
- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Road tested a new digital signage system at Croydon University Hospital to feedback and ensure it works to patients' expectations
- Feedback to the team on issues that we should be investigating or feedback on services and change that we would raise with stakeholders and at key meetings in public.





Sally

"I have just completed my foundation degree in Public Health and Social Care. Volunteering has given me insight into inequalities and inequities that people face. I have now begun a new volunteer role as Diversity Ambassador at Healthwatch where I will be using my lived experience to support better representation from diverse backgrounds to create stronger, healthier communities."



Michael

"I have been a Healthwatch Croydon Volunteer for seven years. It has empowered me and, in turn, I can empower others. Having learned about the health service and its administration as I gather local intelligence I can signpost. It's a two way thing. I get involved with all aspects of the work, mostly online at the moment but we did get out and listen to residents."



Benedita

"I'm a student studying BTEC Applied Science and planning to study medicine at university. I volunteered at Healthwatch Croydon because I admire how they ensure that people's views on care are heard and that improvements are made where possible. The nicest part is having a real influence to help make changes that Croydon residents want to see."



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk



0300 012 0235



robyn.bone@healthwatchcroydon.co.uk

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		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£151,618	Staff costs	£147,030
Additional funding	£14,666	Operational costs	£14,040
Total income	£166,284	Support and administration	£23,400
Planned reserve expenditure*	£18,186	Total expenditure	£184,470

*The expenditure was managed from reserves accrued over previous years.

Top five priorities for 2022-23

1. To improve health and care services by providing feedback from local residents who use services about what works for them.
2. To contribute to the reduction of health inequalities by finding out, and informing the people who design and run health and care services, about what works for people whose views are seldom heard.
3. To contribute to the improvement of local health and social care services by representing the views of local residents to those people responsible for funding, designing and providing such services.
4. To ensure that local people are able to access health and social care services more quickly.
5. To keep informed, and make comments on behalf of local residents, about the impact on local health and social care services of national and local developments, such as the transition to a SWL Integrated Care System and to a directly elected Mayoral system in Croydon.

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Croydon, 24 George Street, Croydon CR0 1PB

Contract holder as of 31 March 2022: Help and Care, A49, Aerodrome Studios, Airfield Way, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 3TS

Healthwatch Croydon is commissioned by Croydon Council.

Healthwatch Croydon 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 Croydon board consists of six 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 communities. Through 2021/22 the board met 11 times and made decisions on approving every piece of work we undertook that year based on using a matrix of questions to ensure relevancy and impact.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We look at the comments we receive from general outreach and calls to our Healthwatch Croydon Hub. Last year, the issue of dentistry came up as an issue that was regularly being commented on particularly access. This led to us taking on a project on the access and experience of dentistry as well as dentist practice websites.

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 a range virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media, as well as some outreach sessions when it was safe to do so.

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, for example, those who have little or no English working with relevant interpreters for, French African, Honduran, Tamil and Ukrainian 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 and promote and share it across the community.

Responses to recommendations and requests

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 Croydon is represented on the Croydon Health and Wellbeing Board by Edwina Morris, Chair of Healthwatch Croydon. During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by participating in discussions about the implications of the proposed ICS developments for Croydon residents; contributing to the Health and Care Plan refresh, including by ensuring that the views of local residents were taken into account (see page 16); commenting on the Integrated Care Network developments (utilising resident insight obtained by Healthwatch Croydon in 2020); presenting the HWC 2020/21 Annual Report alongside Healthwatch Croydon volunteers; and ensuring that the proposed Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment would include residents' views on local pharmacy services and that the Healthwatch Croydon Manager would be offered a place on the steering group.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Hospital signage project	Provided volunteers who had raised issues about signage to road test and feedback and on new digital signage at Croydon University Hospital
GP Access Guide insight	Croydon residents' views influenced advice guide and handbooks sent to 1,200 London GPs. All London GPs now have a report assessed and influenced by us.
Dentistry	Plans to coproduce leaflet to improve knowledge; Practice websites to be assessed against report findings. Raising the profile of this issue with key stakeholders and building support with them and others to influence change.
COVID Vaccine	Insight helping with future planning – discussions on opportunities to conduct further insight with specific groups to help services not just on immunisation but other health issues.
Urgent and Emergency Care	This is already informing commissioning strategy in this area before publication.
Health and Care Plan Refresh	Ensured patient participation groups are now part of the Primary Care aspect of the plan; raised profile of microorganisations perspective on developments and also possible overreliance on a volunteer base to deliver objectives.
CQC Seldom Heard Engagement Report	Informing different strands of CQC strategy including engagement with public.

2021-2022 Outcomes continued

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Personal Independence Coordinators Evaluation	More informal support and information for those once the scheme has finished so service users feel adequately supported to be independent.
Accessible Information Standard	Provided evidence-base for Healthwatch England to champion change nationally. Once published Healthwatch will profile good practice and support improvement locally.
Long COVID	Insight has already been shared at South West London level meetings – all South West Healthwatch here looking to work together to push for change.



Healthwatch Croydon

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