



Annual Report

2018-19



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Some of the many faces of Healthwatch Essex in 2018-19.

Clockwise from top left: Our CEO, Dr David Sollis, at 'Dying Matters Awareness Week' event in November; Communications Lead Rachel & Volunteer and Engagement Officer Dan meeting Theatre Staff at Broomfield Hospital; Caroline Russell, Accountable Officer for Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, judging entries from our Lively Lives! Competition; capturing lived experience on camera at our Patient Bed Roadshow; members of the public and NHS Staff at our NHS 70 Celebration Event.

Introduction

This has been another exciting year for Healthwatch Essex, as we have continued in our commitment to ensure that the lived experience of patients, carers, family and staff is at the centre of helping to shape services across the county.

We have been engaging with the public in a bid to better understand a variety of topics which are central to the delivery of health and social care in Essex. This has included hearing from more than 700 young people from a demographic and geography which is rarely heard, interviewing individuals receiving palliative care to better understand end of life care, and engagement with a wide variety of different groups during our Patient Bed Roadshow which aimed to capture the public's main concerns about health and social care.

Our goal with all of this work is to inform commissioners and providers of services in a way which helps them to bring about meaningful change, where it is needed. We were pleased to see YEAH!3, our project capturing views of young people, attract local and national media coverage as well as catching the attention of public health commissioners who have acted on report findings, using the lived experience to shape Essex County Council's drug strategy.

The National Health Service turned 70 this year and to mark the anniversary, we hosted a celebratory event in partnership with Chelmsford Cathedral. We put patients at its heart, showcasing videos from our competition, Lively Lives!, which encouraged children to share their experience of healthcare and nominate their Healthcare Hero as a way to say 'Thank You' to all NHS staff.

Working alongside the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP), we have developed a programme which has successfully recruited Cancer and Maternity Patient Partners who represent the voice of people in Essex using those services and who have an active role in their transformation and re-design. They have played a crucial role in the development of Macmillan support pods at Basildon and Mid Essex hospitals as well as co-designing the new personal care plans for pregnant women across the STP footprint.

We have sought to work in partnership with new groups, promoting our Information and Signposting Service and raising awareness of the work of the charity at numerous events throughout the year. We are also pleased to have secured a partnership with local radio station, Phoenix FM, which has proved to be an exciting opportunity to reach and support more people in Essex.

We are proud of all that we have achieved this year and are exceptionally grateful to the board of trustees, staff and the volunteers who continue to develop and deliver ever more effective ways of ensuring lived experience is heard at the highest levels. As a charity, we are mindful of, not only the opportunities, but also the challenges that lie ahead in terms of changes to funding, priorities and growing need.

We hope you enjoy reading about our work and we thank you for your continued support.



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink.

Dr David Sollis
Chief Executive Officer



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink.

Leslie Lodge
Chair



About Us

Who we are and what we do

About Us

We are an independent voice for the people of Essex, helping to shape and improve health and social care services in the county. We believe that people's views and lived experience of health and care matter, so we're here to make sure your voice is heard and responded to. We also provide an Information and Signposting Service to help you access, understand and navigate the health and care system.

What we do

Through innovative research and engagement activities - our reports, events, films and outreach events - we make evidence-based recommendations to the NHS and social care authorities and demonstrate how lived experience can have a positive impact on the redesign and improvement of local services. We have powers in law, as set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to encourage people to share their views and lived experience with us.

We also provide an information service to help people access, understand and navigate the health and social care system via a confidential phone call, text or email.

Who we work with

We work closely with the health and social care authorities in Essex to help make sure they put patients and the public first. This includes the five NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, one mental health trust, five acute hospitals, as well as Essex County Council which has responsibility for social care and public health.

We also work with regulators and other commissioners and providers of health, primary care and community care, alongside various voluntary organisations to ensure the voices of Essex residents are heard and taken into consideration when improving local services.

As part of the wider Healthwatch network, we share information with Healthwatch England, which provides a formal link to the Department of Health and Social Care and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Our performance and impact is closely monitored by this network and Essex County Council, which receives our funding each year.





What is 'lived experience'?

'Lived experience' describes people's first-hand accounts of their health and care. How people experience health and care services is affected by their own personal circumstances; for example, whether they have a family or whether they are in work. Their 'lived experience' (good or bad) can shape the trust and confidence they have in health and care services.

That's why it's important the system takes the time to find out about the people who use services – to empathise and recognise the impact their service has on the individual and to use this insight to better understand the health and care needs of the local population.

Our governance

We want to make sure that as many people as possible can share their voice and stories with us and so we continue to take steps to involve the public and volunteers in our governance and decisions about our work.

Our Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic oversight of Healthwatch Essex. They meet at least six times a year, of which two of these are public meetings.

We have also established a Strategic Advisory Group to advise the Board on matters of policy and strategy. This group includes representatives of patients, service users and carers, health and care organisations as well as people from the wider voluntary and community sector.



Our year at a glance

Here are some of our highlights from the last 12 months.

April

We present findings from meaningful engagement with seldom heard young people at the Children and Young People's Annual Mental Health Conference in Manchester.

To mark Experience of Care Week, we publish a series of short films and host a webinar.

In collaboration with the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board, we speak with people to gather experience of safeguarding for Phase 1 of 'Making Safeguarding Personal'.

We launch our Lively Lives! Competition with local schools to encourage young people to live active, healthy lifestyles with a focus on highlighting the importance of NHS staff who keep us fit and healthy.

May

Research continues in the renal and palliative care wards and clinics at Basildon Hospital to explore patient experiences at the end of life and to better understand advanced care planning.



June

Winners of Lively Lives! Competition announced - local schools win £1,000 worth of activity equipment to further encourage healthy living.

We release an article focussing on the importance of the patient voice in safeguarding against harm, following news of a systemic failure in breast screening nationally.

July

We publish YEAH!3, the final report in the trilogy, looking at young people's attitudes to health and social care. We reveal a snapshot of their views on information provided for mental health, smoking, alcohol, nutrition, body image and sexual health.

Our Staff don hospital scrubs as they raise awareness of our work and the Information & Signposting Service with Broomfield Hospital theatre staff.

Recruitment begins for our new Ambassador Programme: Cancer and Maternity Patient Partners.



August



Following our Lively Lives! bunting competition, we reunite children and their Healthcare Heroes in a series of short films to be shown at our NHS 70 Celebratory Event later in the year.

We secure a partnership with local radio station, Phoenix FM.

September

Refugee Action Colchester host our team away day. They provide a cooking-based exercise and share their stories.

We launch Care Maze films at High Chelmer Shopping Centre showing the challenges of navigating your way through health and social care services. The films were commissioned following a 2016 report which found that pathways to residential care were a 'maze'.





October

Healthwatch Essex Instagram is launched - @HWEssex.

To celebrate the NHS turning 70, we host an event in partnership with Chelmsford Cathedral and showcase patient stories.

We travel across the county with our Patient Bed Roadshow and engage with hundreds of residents to capture their lived experience and main concerns about health and social care.

November

We develop a relationship with Blind Veterans UK and meet local veterans to hear their stories.

Our Information & Signposting Service launches a confidential text service.

We become the first Healthwatch in the country to make a public commitment to 'Purple Tuesday'.

We pledge to continue raising awareness, sharing the voices and improving accessibility for the disabled community.



December

We publish our report 'Constructing the End of Life', revealing the challenges that patients, their families and hospital staff experience when planning for end of life.

Bi-monthly guest blogs begin with posts from Ambassadors.

We produce and launch radio adverts to promote the Information & Signposting Service on Phoenix FM.

January

Our team relocates to our new office premises in Earls Colne.

Healthwatch Essex CEO, Dr. David Sollis, and Chairman, Leslie Lodge, travel to London to raise the real-life concerns of people using health and social care services with local MPs at Parliament.

Staff complete Dementia Friends training.

February

We contribute data to the parliamentary discussion about funding of the NHS in Essex and share our position on the NHS Long-Term Plan.

Work begins on redesigning the Healthwatch Essex website to launch early April 2019.



March

We host an event to show how co-production can be achieved across local health services and share a new film created to showcase the success of our Mental Health Ambassador programme.

Healthwatch Essex supports local veterans at the Blind Veterans UK 'March for March' event and promote the Information and Signposting Service.





Listening & Engaging

Capturing and sharing your experiences to help improve health and care services



Your voice matters

Your lived experience is at the heart of our work. In 2018 -19, hundreds of you shared your lived experience of health and care with us. Here are some of the key issues you've raised.

Young people in Essex would like:

- Consistent nutritional information in the media
- Access to cheaper and closer activities so they meet the exercise guidelines
- Information on smoking and drinking relevant to their age group and not just focussed on the long-term effects in adults
- To learn about social aspects of sex and relationships



“The way PE comes across... people feel forced to do it. It would be better if it was made a little bit more enjoyable.”

YEAH! 3 Participant

“Unpaid carers should be paid - or at least better-considered. My son is an unpaid carer for me, two days a week. I think paid carers should get a better salary so that the job appeals to high quality candidates.”

Pam, Age 83
Colchester

Main concerns of health and social care services from the people of Essex:

- Access and provision of mental health services
- Awareness of child support services
- Improvement of waiting times in hospitals and GP surgeries
- Access to befriending services to prevent isolation and loneliness

Our projects

Read how we've captured your voice through our reports and working in partnership for various projects.



Left to right | Patient Experience Award Winner Joshua Newman with his mother, Suzy Newman, at our NHS 70 Celebration Event November 2018.

Innovative engagement with young children

Our Lively Lives! Competition is an innovative and effective way to engage with primary school-aged children. It is used as a fun way to raise awareness of important issues, as well as capturing the lived experience of young children.

This year's competition was launched to coincide with the 70th birthday of the NHS and children were asked to design a piece of bunting. It focussed on celebrating the important work across the sector and, in particular,

“As part of this initiative, we hope that teachers and group leaders will take up the opportunity to use our resources to highlight the vast array of career opportunities within the NHS, how to use NHS services wisely and the importance of healthy living.”

Dr. David Sollis
CEO, Healthwatch Essex



Left to right | Competition Winner, Holly Banner-Martin. Volunteer & Engagement Officer, Dan Potts. Competition Winner, Alice Gray

“Dr. Babu helped save my life and now my heart is fixed. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Joshua Newman, Age 5
Competition Winner | Patient Experience Award

“He makes my day. As soon as he sees me, he hugs me and then, for the next two weeks, no matter what problems I have, I can face them.”

Dr. Babu

the professionals - the ‘healthcare heroes’ - that care for us and help keep us fit and healthy. We also captured some of their stories on film by asking them what they thought of the NHS, seventy years on from its creation.

“I went for an injection and they said I was the best patient ever.”, Layla, Age 7

“When my Dad was 20, he was classed as disabled. Due to the NHS’ kind support, he is now a brilliant wheelchair basketball player.”, Finley, Age 11

Ninety schools registered to take part in the competition. Teachers were able to use the resource pack to present pupils with information about the history of the NHS, careers in health and care and some awareness around staying healthy and choosing the correct services. On their bunting, children drew and wrote about an NHS professional or healthcare setting that was important, or had made the greatest difference to them.

Over 1,000 entries were received, which were judged by a panel of representatives from CCGs and hospitals

throughout Essex. An overall winner was chosen, along with a runner-up from both the infant and junior categories, who between them received £1,000-worth of activity equipment for their schools. Winning entries were featured in our birthday celebration campaign and some of their stories were captured on film. The 1,015 pieces of bunting were divided into CCG areas and put on display in a local hospital or at an event on 5th July.

We also created a special Patient Experience Award, which was won by five-year-old Joshua Newman from Writtle Infant School. He shared his story of being saved by the NHS after experiencing problems with his heart when he was born prematurely. He acknowledged that without his pioneering heart surgery, he wouldn’t be here today. Joshua and his Mum went on to speak at our NHS 70 Celebratory Event in November where we also showed a film reuniting Joshua with his surgeon, Dr. Babu. The impact of this led to the Royal Brompton Charity thanking Joshua directly for his work for the NHS and treating him to a VIP experience at Chelsea Football Club training ground.

A unique element of Lively Lives! competition is its ability to gather insight into the children’s experiences of health and care services, which is captured in our report. The majority of experiences related to doctors and nurses, but there were also many stories about dentists. As a result of this, we will be working with Public Health England to create an animation for use in primary schools, which will encourage regular appointments and help children feel more comfortable visiting the dentist.

Spotlight on young people's experience of care in Essex

Since 2015, the Healthwatch Essex Engagement Team has actively engaged with nearly 2,000 young people across Essex. YEAH!, which stands for Young Essex Attitudes on Health & Social Care, provides a spotlight on health and social care lived experiences.

Our YEAH! 3 report, published in July, engaged with 717 young people aged 16-19 participating in the National Citizen Service. Building on the success of the first two YEAH! Reports, which led to national and local impact across the health and social care sectors, the final publication of the trilogy explores in more detail how young people feel they need to take care of their health and how they wish to access services. The report expands on public health topics discussed in 2015 and 2016 and shares a snapshot of young people's views on a range of topics, including mental health, smoking, alcohol and nutrition.

The engagement revealed a fascinating picture of what matters most to young people.

80%

Told us the cost of food was a key factor in the nutritional choices they made.

75%

Felt they had not received enough information on drugs and alcohol to make informed decisions to keep themselves safe.

75%

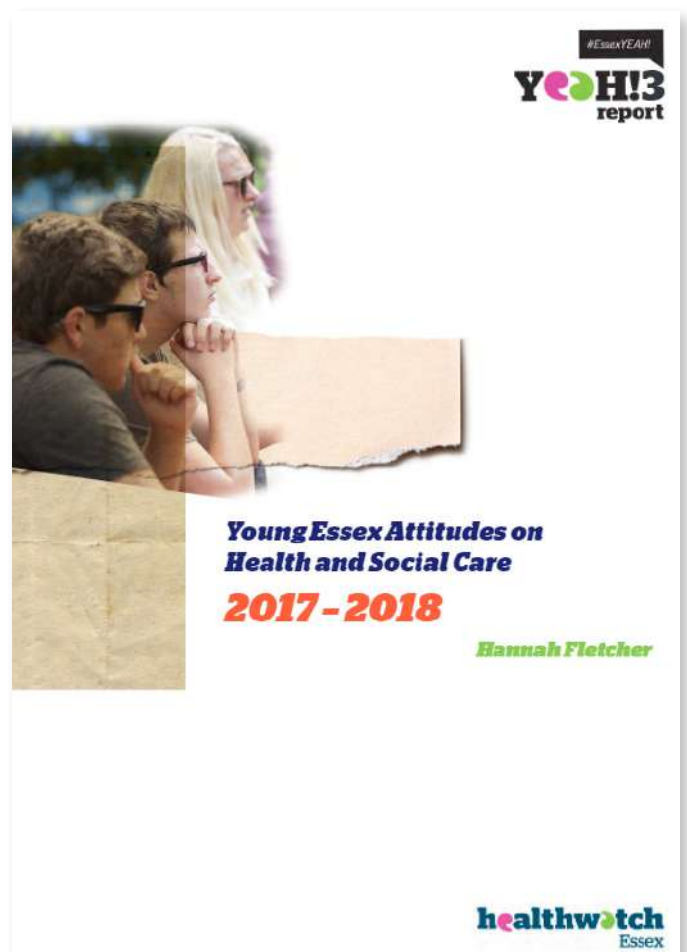
Wanted to learn about the social aspects of intimate relationships such as consent, exploitation, abuse and LGBTQ+ identities.

20%

Identified cannabis smoking as prevalent in their age group due to cost and accessibility compared to cigarettes and felt it was smoked more frequently than cigarettes.

"If we had more sex education it would be talked about more freely and it would be less awkward to go to a doctor and say I've got something wrong with me."

YEAH!3 Participant





“Our generation makes snap decisions. Like Facebook, everything is instant. No one thinks 40 years into the future. No one thinks I might get a brain tumour because I drank too much when I was 18.”

YEAH!3 Participant

This project has enabled young people to be the voice of change and set the agenda for their own health and care priorities. Our recommendations received significant media coverage and were broadcast and discussed on a local and regional level on BBC Look East, BBC Essex Radio, Heart FM and The Mail on Sunday, amongst others. As a result of this coverage, the findings on cannabis use made national debate.

We have seen the groups’ opinions and ideas embedded in Sustainable Transformation Plans (STPs) and report findings used to inform local council programmes and committees.

The issues around drug use caught the attention of public health commissioners across Essex who are using the experiences we captured to shape Essex County Council’s drug strategy and also feeding into the Council’s Sport England pilot work.

The Chair of Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group highly praised the work and said that the findings would feed into the Collaborative Children and Young People’s Forum and will help inform the stretch targets for access to emotional wellbeing and mental health services.





Navigating the care maze

“Some [healthcare professionals] are better trained than others but, at the same time, they’re following their guidelines. They’re working to their timescales, which might not be yours and, again, most of this is office hours.”

Maggie
Negotiating the Care Maze Participant

In September, we launched four films showing the challenges of navigating your way through health and social care services. These were commissioned following a 2016 report by Healthwatch Essex which found that pathways to negotiating residential care were a ‘maze’. The study pulled together interesting examples of lived experience of those seeking to place someone in residential care who could no longer be cared for at home. The findings identified how difficult it was to be obtain easy-to-understand information and recommended that better signposting be put in place.

Social care leaders in the county joined us as we launched the films in High Chelmer Shopping Centre on a large screen where they played on loop throughout the week, reaching tens of thousands of shoppers. The films focussed on some of the most common challenges carers face, from putting in place appropriate care for someone being discharged from hospital through to caring for someone with dementia.

The films offered the opportunity to promote our Information and Signposting Team who can confidentially support people through the care maze.

Throughout the week, staff at the event engaged with the public and encouraged them to fill in surveys giving us insight into the issues which would most likely cause people to pick up the phone to Healthwatch Essex. This included how we can make the service as accessible as possible to people of all ages and backgrounds.

From the completed surveys, we discovered that over 30% would contact an information service based on individual need, 17% to understand and navigate healthcare and 15% for easy access to services.

67% of the engaged public aged between 45 and 60+ highlighted the following topics to be of most interest to them; diet & nutrition, elderly care and cancer.



Left to right | Phil Picton, Chairman of Essex Safeguarding Adult Board and Dr. David Sollis, Healthwatch Essex CEO at Care Maze event, High Chelmer.

Healthwatch Essex turns Purple

For a few years now, we have shared the voice of people with disabilities through our Learning Disability Ambassadors. As a charity, we are very committed to improving opportunities and access for people with disabilities and are delighted to share that we are now part of a wider network that also seeks to achieve this.

We are the first Healthwatch in the country to become a member of Purple and make a public commitment to Purple Tuesday; an international call to action, improving the awareness of the value and needs of disabled people.

“The ladies always have time for you in Tescos and they’ll allocate a youngster to go with you and get whatever it is you can’t find. It’s easy. It’s now a destination, it’s not a shopping trip, it’s where people go. If I can go every day, I get through the week because with that and the singing, the week goes by.”

Les Brown
Blind Veterans UK Choir Member



Les Brown, Blind Veterans UK Choir Member

Purple aims to change conversations about inequality and disadvantage into ones which are focused on potential and value.

We continued our work with Blind Veterans UK and supported Purple Tuesday by visiting one of the veterans, Les, at his home to talk about his lived experiences.

Les Brown enlightened us about his service during the war and the lasting effects this has had on his health. He kindly allowed us to film him and also gave some insight into how he manages on a day-to-day basis with his sight loss, such as going shopping and preparing drinks for himself.



Above | NHS Staff, stakeholders and public at Chelmsford Cathedral. Below right | Sadie, Information & Signposting Officer at NHS 70 Event.

NHS turns 70!

To mark the anniversary, we hosted a celebratory event in partnership with Chelmsford Cathedral. Our wide network of health and care colleagues and members of the public were invited to attend and share their thanks and appreciation for the support they've received from the NHS and its workers.

Patient stories were at the heart of the service, with videos and speakers, including Chelmsford's Mayor, Councillor Yvonne Spence. Films from our Lively Lives! Competition were played on a large screen which showed children sharing their experience of healthcare, nominating their healthcare heroes and saying thank you to all NHS workers.

The Dean of the Cathedral later shared with us that our event format has become the model for the way they work with other charities and community organisations, given how successful it was.



“Congratulations from all of us at Mid Essex Hospitals Trust for an excellent NHS 70th Birthday Celebration. The format of the afternoon was so sensitively put together and the contributions from everyone really touched all those I talked to. We hope to circulate the video within the Trust to remind us all of the impact of our work within the community.”

Timothy Blake
Lead Chaplain & Bereavement Services Manager
Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust

Patient Bed Roadshow goes down a Storm

Following our NHS 70 celebration event, we engaged with hundreds of people across the county – capturing their lived experiences and main concerns within health and social care. The bed travelled around five locations in each part of the county – Brentwood, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow and Southend.

In each location we heard interesting stories which shed light on patient experiences and the issues that matter most to people. We captured 21 stories on film and numerous others in written format.

Emma Wiles told us about the excellent care she received at Broomfield Hospital after her baby daughter sadly died there earlier this year. Emma (pictured right) with Specialist Midwife, Tabitha, said that she owed Tabitha a huge thank you for her support during a very difficult time.

In Harlow, we heard from a lady who had discovered thousands of pounds of unused medication that someone she knew had in their home. She expressed concern about the amount of wastage when people do not review their repeat prescriptions.

Across each of the locations we attended, trends emerged about individual's key concerns. Access to and provision for mental health support appeared as a key concern, as well as access to GP services when people needed them.

Several hundred flyers and cards were distributed during the roadshow which saw a 4.6% increase in website traffic; a total of 2,200 unique users.

We saw spikes of engagement across our three key social media platforms that were used throughout the week to encourage the public to follow our roadshow and join the conversation with the hashtag #ItStartsWithYou.

“I actually came into hospital for what can only be described as the worst experience of my life - finding out that my baby's heart had stopped. But the care I received from the midwives who delivered Isla, and Tabitha, the bereavement midwife, was amazing.”

Emma Wiles



Top | Emma Wiles and midwife Tabitha. West Essex Paramedic, Healthwatch Essex Communications Lead being interviewed for Heart FM/BBC Essex. Dan and Hannah, Engagement Team with 83-year-old Pam in Community360. Far Left | Mum and son sharing their story at Brentwood Leisure Centre.

Constructing the end of life

Did you know that only 6% of people in England have an Advanced Care Plan?

Crucial conversations about death, dying and bereavement are often avoided amongst family and friends, and society can view it as a taboo subject.

In December, we published our research report, 'Constructing the End of Life: Tools, Conversations, Ideas of Home'. Over a period of four months, we conducted the study looking at end of life care challenges and advanced care planning at a hospital in Essex. The research attends to the challenges that patients, their families and hospital staff experience when planning for end of life.

Research took place at Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital's palliative medicine and renal departments over a 16-week period. We observed approximately 150 consultations and attended almost 100 ward rounds over the course of the fieldwork. We observed and interviewed staff formally and informally throughout the research as well as informally interviewing the patients staff met with. We also interviewed GPs across Essex on their views and



experiences of end of life care planning and its challenges.

The report revealed that home as a 'place' rather than a 'concept' is not necessarily the best space for people at the end of life. Rather, certain aspects – feelings of safety, security, comfort and reassurance – become critical to people's conceptualisation of a good death. Importantly, those feelings also incorporate the way that patients' families feel.

Death is unpredictable and, where people are not having these conversations, it is important for healthcare professionals to educate families about what end of life experiences can look like to help manage expectations and put them at ease.

However, conversations are not only avoided amongst patients but, as identified in our research, GPs do not always feel confident about end of life planning - often postponing discussions. The report found that GPs needed more support to feel more comfortable with end of life care and conversations. The report identified a concern around not having a big enough specialist palliative care workforce to ensure such conversations take place and support is provided.

The report findings and recommendations will be shared and used in the national campaign, Dying Matters Awareness Week in May 2019 to encourage individuals to have these crucial conversations.

Feelings of safety, security and comfort, if experienced in hospital more than their residence, could make hospital 'home' for some patients.

'Constructing the End of Life: Tools, Conversations, Ideas of Home', Dr Jennifer Rogerson

Working in partnership | Co-production at its best

Out of 129 applicants, Healthwatch Essex was one of nine organisations awarded a 'Sharing and Celebrating Patient and Public Involvement in Healthcare' community grant from NHS England.

We used our grant to create a film to showcase the success of the Mental Health Ambassador programme, which enabled patients and carers with direct experience of mental health services, to work alongside commissioners from seven Clinical Commissioning Groups and three councils, to co-produce the first pan-Essex Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The film demonstrates how people's lived experience can be used to influence or shape services. It also highlights the benefits of working together for both professionals and patients.

To launch the film, we hosted an event in March to promote our experience of facilitating co-production, which was well attended by professionals from CCG's, Councils, providers, and universities, along with several volunteers.

The event highlighted how the involvement of volunteers, such as our Ambassadors and Patient Partners, breaks away from the traditional view of patient involvement as a tick box exercise. It emphasised the importance of identifying areas of work where meaningful engagement can take place and how these volunteers need to be supported in a structured and safe environment.

Our Mental Health Ambassadors, Tamsin and John, shared the reasons they got involved with the Ambassador programme and how they wanted to make a difference.

Another guest speaker was Claire Hankey, Director of Communications for Mid Essex STP, who presented on the development of a new Citizens' Panel and future models of public and patient involvement, including the ongoing work with our Patient Partners.

The event received great feedback from all attendees with 82% rating the event as 'Very Good' and the remaining 18% as 'Excellent'. The blended approach between staff, commissioners, patient stories and practical examples made a positive impact on the audience with attendees pledging to think about how they can introduce co-production activities into their future projects.

Due to the success of the event we are now developing a training tool to accompany the film.



Cheryl Huggins, Volunteer & Engagement Officer, presenting at the event.

"It has encouraged me to take proactive action in my organisation to improve how we approach working with people to make a meaningful difference."

Event Attendee



Informing

**Helping you access the
information you need about
health and care services**

In the know

Our Information and Signposting Service answers questions and concerns about health and care services confidentially via call, text or e-mail.

How many people called us?

1,753 people sought support and information from our Information & Signposting Team online, by text, call or email in the last year. That equates to over 30 enquiries each week!

How did people find out about our Information Service?

The most popular sources are:

Previous Callers



GP Surgery



Internet Search



Local Providers



Outreach Events



What are people calling about?

Frequent lines of enquiry include:



Difficulty accessing GP services



Information & access to mental health services



Support for individuals with learning disabilities



Enquiries on available social care support



Information on equipment and home adaptations

Who's using the information service?



47%

Service User / Patient

21%

Relative

14%

Health or Care Professional

9%

Carer



Informing

Over the past year, our Information & Signposting Service has helped 1,753 people across the county.

“A massive thank you for your help. In what would have been a minefield of confusion, we have already got the ball rolling with support ... all through your advice.”

Caller, Braintree

Information Service

Summer 2018 saw the Information Service gain a new Team Lead and the number of calls and emails continue to increase.

Some of the most common topics people enquire about include difficulty in accessing GP services (in particular, in Mid Essex), support for individuals with learning disabilities, information on accessibility to mental health services and concerns about home adaptations following hospital discharge.

We extended our support by launching a text and WhatsApp service in November to encourage younger residents to contact us if they need help to navigate, understand and access health and care services.

We continue to get out and about promoting our service across Essex, at information conferences, community events, support groups, care home open days and other events to reach as many Essex residents as possible. Outreach events have included; visiting the Dementia Cafe in Harlow, offering support and advice at Winter Resilience Roadshows, building relationships with seldom heard groups such as Refugee Action Colchester and the CHHAT team, attending the Diabetes Education Day in Brentwood and the official launch of Farleigh Hospice's new outreach vehicle.

Through this activity and the publication of our reports, Healthwatch Essex was mentioned in the news in 92 different articles during the year covering a multitude of topics including; consultations on the merger of local

Feedback Centre re-launch

Our online Feedback Centre, where individuals can share their experiences of health and social care in Essex in the format of an online review and star rating, received more than 120 new reviews in 2018-2019 providing feedback on over 79 local services.

Due to a website redesign, the Feedback Centre will be re-launched in Summer 2019 to match the new look and feel of our site. Members of the public and all providers will be notified.

Information Service

We can help you find out about:

Health and care services near to you

How to access the support and advice you need

What to do if you have a concern or complaint

How to share feedback about services

call 0300 500 1895

for the cost of a local call

hospitals, the Patient Bed Roadshow, our Patient Partner programme, YEAH! 3 Report findings, Lively Lives! Competition and GPs out-of-hours services in Essex.

In addition, the team established a weekly blog on the Healthwatch Essex website which provides a spotlight on recent call enquiries, their latest outreach events and general support coinciding with our reports and national awareness campaigns. Key stakeholders have responded positively to these blogs with some becoming guest bloggers including Farleigh Hospice, Public Health England and Blind Veterans UK.

“You made me feel like I wasn’t fighting on my own and you sent some incredibly useful information. What a wonderful company you are! How helpful you are! You understand and explain.”

Caller, Colchester

Spotlight on Services

As well as sharing the insight from our calls with health and care authorities to help improve services, we have developed a new infographic.

Spotlight on Services captures the top 10 enquiries for each Clinical Commissioning Group Area in Essex on a quarterly basis.

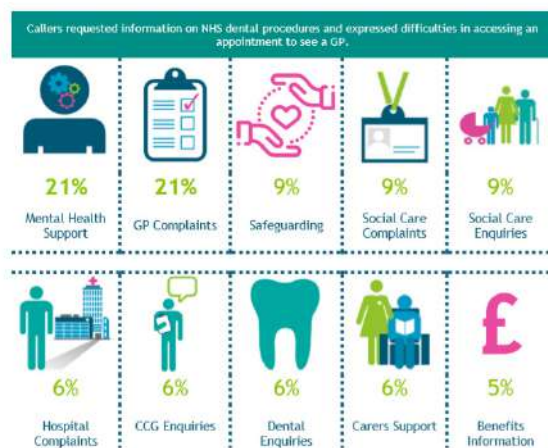
The data is shared with all local providers of health and social care services in the county to show them the key concerns of their local residents and areas of care that may need improving.

The calls we receive also continue to be a key source of information which informs our engagement and research activity through the year.

In the future, the data will be displayed on the new website and a link will be sent to all providers and key stakeholders for their information.

Spotlight on Services

Healthwatch Essex Information Service helps people across the county understand and access health and social care services. This is a summary of the key topics raised by callers from October - December 2018 about services in Castle Point & Rochford CCG area. For more details, please get in touch with the Information Service: call 0300 500 1895, text 07511 902 080 or email info@healthwatchessex.org.uk





Our Volunteers

Helping more people have their say
through the power of co-production



Mental Health Ambassadors, Tamsin & Jackie

How do volunteers help us?

At Healthwatch Essex, we couldn't make all of these improvements and input into projects or strategies without the support of our large volunteer network.

More than 50 volunteers currently offer their time to Healthwatch Essex in our efforts to make health and care services better meet the needs of local people.

They are regularly out talking and listening to people in the community, supporting community events and providing advice and information about the NHS and social care services to the public.

Volunteers have donated many hours of their time this year and have been involved in numerous projects including:

- Learning Disability Ambassadors helped shape the Living Well Essex website to ensure it is user friendly and accessible.
- Cancer Patient Partners attended Anglia Ruskin University nurse curriculum planning to give their views on what behaviours and standards should be sought after in future students.
- Maternity Patient Partners have completed user testing on new apps which will deliver personalised advice to pregnant women across Mid & South Essex.
- Ambassadors have attended various Healthwatch Essex events including the Patient Bed Roadshow whereby they supported staff to capture the lived experience of the public.

“Using their lived experience to inform and assist in the creation of new and improved services not only empowers those who choose to participate and enables their voices to be heard, but also encourages a more effective use of resources to deliver a wholesome service, taking into account a wider perspective.”

Cheryl Huggins
Volunteer & Engagement Officer
Healthwatch Essex



Healthwatch Essex Trustee, Leslie Lodge



Patient Partners

The Healthwatch Essex Ambassador Programme was developed to ensure that lived experience is used effectively to influence and shape service design and delivery. The model involves recruiting, training and supporting volunteers with direct experience of specific health and care services, and facilitating their input into the decision-making process.

Lived experience making a real difference

Unlike the more traditional method of 'patient representation' at meetings, we have adopted a creative and flexible approach, removing barriers to participation and enabling a wider group of people to be involved. What's more, we actively identify areas where engagement and co-production can have maximum impact.

During the past year, Healthwatch Essex has worked alongside the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership to create the Cancer and Maternity Patient Partners programmes, which actively involve patients and their families in the transformation of these services.

Our Maternity Patient Partner programme has already enjoyed notable success. By recruiting from local mother and baby groups, in postnatal settings and via social media support groups, we were able to reach a far broader range of women, rather than solely collecting views from small groups of women at local hospital level. We accessed these volunteers in their own surroundings, at convenient times, which has encouraged their conversations and involvement in the programme.

Working to support the vision of the national 'Better Births' report, we pulled together resources across the entire STP and used the Maternity Voices Partnership as a central steering group for engagement. This has enabled both lay and professional members, such as matrons,

and representatives from NCT and local charities, to work collaboratively towards improving the maternity journey.

Our Patient Partner programme is flexible and accessible, enabling volunteers to participate whatever their circumstance. Volunteers are trained and supported on an ongoing basis so that they feel empowered and valued, and they have use of our online portal, where they can chat to each other, review information, or contribute to meetings when/if they are unable to attend.

NHS staff recognise value of volunteers

The Patient Partners have successfully worked alongside commissioners and NHS staff by sharing their stories, positively influencing services through the use of lived experience.

Maternity Patient Partners co-designed the new personalised care plans, highlighting the importance of choice and knowledge, therefore encouraging midwives to further understand women's needs.

Cancer Patient Partners placed focus on questions surrounding support highlighted by the National Cancer Patient Experience Survey, ensuring work could be taken forward to address issues which scored lowly.

Our approach has entirely changed the way in which we have been able to gather views. The number of volunteers participating is consistently increasing and the quality, and timely delivery of patient views, means that NHS staff are recognising the value that effective engagement with patients can bring.

Our Patient Partners have told us that the opportunity has been incredibly enjoyable and sharing their experiences has been easier than anticipated. Many of our volunteers have encouraged others to get involved because they feel their voice matters and can effect real change.



Maternity Patient Partners

"I just wanted to say a massive thank you to you all (and the small people too!) for coming and spending time with us as we start thinking about future midwife curriculum. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. I see it as just the beginning though and would like to extend the invitation to anyone else who would like to be involved, even if that just means sending me emails with ideas or suggestions!"

Kate Cook

Course Leader in Women & Children's Health
Anglia Ruskin University

"Thank you very much for sending observations and helpful suggestions - very valuable feedback and suggestions from patients."

Caroline Baya

Macmillan Recovery Package & Risk
Stratification Clinical Project Manager
Mid & South Essex Joint Commissioning Team

Meet our volunteers

Mike Chapman Cancer Patient Partner

Mike, having worked as an NHS Foundation Trust Director for many years, was sadly diagnosed with bowel cancer in January 2017. Following his role at the NHS being made redundant, he decided to take early retirement but his life was taken over by cancer which soon spread to his liver, lungs and diaphragm, meaning he was then transferred onto a palliative pathway.

Approaching Healthwatch Essex in November 2018, Mike expressed a wish to 'give something back' and share his experience of cancer services, to help improve the pathways for future patients and their families in Mid and South Essex. Although too unwell to work, Mike felt that he could volunteer some of his time by getting involved with our Cancer Patient Partner project, whereby those affected by cancer could have input into the design of new services locally.

Despite his health, Mike dedicated a great deal of his time to the project in the hope that we could, as a team, influence NHS services positively. His passion surrounded the need for greater support during treatment, improvements in communication and reiterating the importance of treating patients as real people, often quoting at meetings "cancer is just one part of my life, not all of it!". Taking every opportunity to participate, Mike was at the forefront of the project and would be the first to offer his assistance, whether in person at meetings and events or virtually when views were sought across the region.

His openness and honesty in relation to his diagnosis was truly inspiring. Under no illusion that his life would eventually be taken by this cruel disease, Mike continued to encourage others to share their story and speak up

in the same way. In the last couple of months, Mike went into liver failure and his condition rapidly deteriorated, yet he continued to volunteer where he could. His final participation in the project was sitting on a panel during 'Dying Matters' week, where Mike and his wife spoke emotively about the difficulty of preparing for end of life and the importance of being 'ready'. This was shared across Essex during the awareness week, across social media platforms and at Farleigh Hospice, to encourage discussion around end of life.



Cancer Patient Partner, Mike Chapman.

We have very recently received the difficult news that Mike has passed away (May 2019), which is a devastating loss to his family, friends and of course the Cancer Patient Partners and wider Healthwatch Essex team. In his final few weeks, Mike expressed a wish that we use everything he has given us to try and effect change - and to the best of our abilities, our goal is to share his story far and wide. A truly inspirational man, that despite his advanced diagnosis and limited time, chose to spend his last few months volunteering with us, sharing his lived experience to improve the cancer journey for others.



Maternity Patient Partner Rachel Farrant with daughter Florence.

“You can’t make change if you don’t get up and do something about it. Doing this was one of the best decisions I’ve made because it’s put the power back in my court. To have the opportunity to make a difference is really important and it’s given me a lot of pride. I feel really proud to be a part of it.”

Rachel Farrant
Maternity Patient Partner

Samantha Glover

Board Member & Vice Chair

With support from the Healthwatch Essex Learning Disability Ambassadors, and the local health facilitation nurses, Sam was able to create a suite of resources to help improve dentist access for adults with learning disabilities. The resources included an easy read ‘top tips’ for visiting, a webinar for local dental practices and examples and lived experience that was fed into the National Reasonable Adjustments Guide. The health facilitation nurses involved in this project have also been shortlisted for a national award for their work and contribution.

Additionally, following the successful Lively Lives! Competition, a theme of ‘fear of the dentist’ was identified amongst the entries. To address this, Sam has been working closely with one of our Healthwatch Essex Volunteer and Engagement Officers to create an animation and teachers’ pack to help children feel more comfortable at the dentist by explaining the various equipment that may be used.

Rachel Farrant

Maternity Patient Partner

Rachel joined us as a Maternity Patient Partner in the Autumn of 2018, having had baby Florence earlier that year.

Passionate about empowering women by giving them more information about their choices during pregnancy, she also wants to see greater consistency in decision-making across the hospitals in Mid and South Essex. She has given input into the new student nurse curriculum, carrying out ‘15 steps’ (an innovative way to review a patient’s initial impressions) in maternity wards and created blogs and videos of her experiences, making her an invaluable member of our Patient



Looking ahead

Our priorities for 2019 - 2020





In the pipeline

Whilst the world of health and care changes daily, Healthwatch Essex remains a constant. Healthwatch Essex is looking forward to 2019-20 with great excitement and determination to make an ever-greater impact for the people of Essex.

We will launch and promote the SWEET! 3 report, the final instalment in the trilogy of work with seldom heard groups of young people. In this report, the first of its kind in Essex, young people being treated in a secure inpatient mental health setting share their lived experience of mental illness, the surrounding services, and the factors they believe could make the biggest difference to their recovery.

We will launch our new and innovative e-learning course on 'Understanding Neurology', aimed at professionals who work as carers, in social work or in GP surgeries. Developed in partnership with the Essex Neurology Network, the course has been developed as a direct result of the findings from a range of engagement activities undertaken with neurological patients and professionals over the last few years. The content has been created by both patients and experts and provides real insight into what it's like to live with a neurological condition and how these individuals can be best supported to live independently for longer, and with a better quality of life.

Through last year's Lively Lives! competition, many children told us about their worries of visiting the dentist. In response, we have been working with Public Health England to create an animation to help children understand what might happen at a dental appointment. This educational resource will be accessible to all primary schools in Essex.

Promoting and facilitating co-production will remain high on our agenda. We will continue to recruit, support and train volunteers for specific projects where they can have real impact; using their own lived experience to help shape strategies, services and care pathways. Our Ambassador Programme has been widely recognised and the grant we were awarded by NHS England's Community grant programme has funded the production of a short film

to showcase our approach. This will be used as a tool to promote good practice in co-production. This coming year we will focus on supporting volunteers who have direct experience of maternity services in Essex and those with disabilities.

The Collaborate Essex project will commence this year and will see us creating and facilitating a forum, representing adults with disabilities from all over the county. The forum will give members the opportunity to have their voice heard at a senior level within Essex County Council, in the forward planning of co-production activities and long-term agendas over the next three years, as well as the wider health and care system.

Support and access to mental health services is a high priority within the NHS long-term plan. This year we will be undertaking our "Mental Health in Emergency Services" engagement project. Emergency service workers experience unique pressures and are often exposed to traumatic situations which make them more likely to experience mental health problems. We will be engaging with front line professionals within the police, ambulance and fire services, as well as acute hospitals in Essex, to learn how these challenges impact on their own wellbeing, and how they are supported.

In summer 2019, we will launch our new feedback centre in line with the new look and feel of our website, which will continue to be the heart of high-quality information and signposting across Essex. This year, we will also publish our new strategy, moving the charity forward and setting out our short to medium term plans.

Finance

To help us carry out our work, we receive our funding from the Department of Health and Social Care via Essex County Council. Here's how we've spent our money.

Information and Signposting



£158k

Outreach and Engagement



£126k

Commissioning and Research



£90k

Communications



£87k

Governance



£12k

Our total expenditure from April 2018 - March 2019 was £473K. All income received but not spent has been carried forward.

Each of the figures below includes an appropriate share of company overheads and office running costs.



Thank you

We work with a huge range of different people and groups, making it impossible to list everyone who has made such an incredible difference to our work.

Instead, we want to thank everyone who took the time to share their experiences with us, in all of the ways that you did - from drawings to film and written pieces - your insight has helped inform us of what we should be paying closest attention to in health and social care in Essex. Your voice is heard and can make a real difference to others.

We'd also like to thank our hard-working Ambassadors, Patient Partners and Trustees, our bloggers, film and podcast participants, as well as our suppliers and partners for their continued support, over the past 12 months.

We continue to work closely with our local commissioners, providers and regulators of health and social care, alongside numerous public sector organisations, all of whom we are enormously grateful to, for supporting our work and often working alongside us to ensure its success.

A big thank you is also due to the voluntary sector across the county who have partnered with us on numerous projects and who continue to accommodate our work to understand and improve health and social care for the people of Essex.



Healthwatch Essex
Team and Board

2018-19

Why not get involved?



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Information Service

We can answer your questions
about health and care services

Call

0300 500 1895

Text

07712 395 398

Monday to Friday
9am to 5pm
for the cost of a local
call and text

Download a PDF of our Annual Report
at www.healthwatchesessex.org.uk

To request a hard copy or alternative format,
please contact the office above

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