



Annual Report 2024–2025

**Unlocking the power of
people-driven care**

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"Croydon residents have helped make a difference to health and social care services by sharing their experiences and views with us. From hearing from vulnerable migrants to getting feedback about new services such as virtual wards, we have shared what you have said to help support improvements. Thank you!"

Gordon Kay, Healthwatch Croydon Manager

About us

Healthwatch Croydon is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and 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

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



Our mission

To make sure that people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

Equity: We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

Collaboration: We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

Impact: We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

Independence: Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

Truth: We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

Introducing Healthwatch Croydon

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)

Yinka Faponnle

Engagement Lead

Gordon Kay

Healthwatch Croydon Manager

Elisabeth Wilson

Research and Engagement Officer

Jeet Sandhu

Communications Lead

Our Local Leadership Board

Edwina Morris (Chair)

Sandra Dodgson (Deputy Chair)

Olusina Adeniyi

Martin Faiers

Bev Grant

Pat Knight

Ellie Sheppard

Healthwatch Croydon and Public Voice

Healthwatch Croydon is commissioned by Croydon Council. It is managed by Public Voice, a nonprofit organisation that delivers resident and community engagement to improve public services and reduce inequalities.

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.

Dan Rogers as Chief Executive Officer of Public Voice is a member of the board. Gordon Kay is the operational manager and so attends the board.

A message from our Chair

Healthwatch Croydon has big ambitions to improve people's experiences of health and social care services but has limited resources to achieve them. Hence, we make the most of available resources. This includes:

- Being supported by our host organisation, Public Voice, through services such as HR, finance, payroll, IT, information and advice services (see pages 23-24).
- Seeking external funding for more engagement with people about services such as Community Diagnostic Centres (page 17), eye services (page 20), reablement and intermediate care (page 19) and how the voluntary sector support health and social care (page 16).
- Collaborating with South West London organisations for Research Café (page 31).
- Working with Healthwatch England who lobby nationally on our behalf, speaking to ministers and senior stakeholders in health and social care services, and using insight from us and over 150 other local Healthwatch across England. We have also recently completed their national Quality Framework programme, receiving a Commitment to Quality marque.
- The dedicated work of our volunteers (pages 25-26). This included Benedict Okafor, an MSc student who led on work on hearing from people from Black African and Black Caribbean communities with diabetes about their experience of using health services (page 22), and Oktawia Pawlowska and Muqadas Ahmed who carried out interviews for our Community Diagnostic Centres project (page 17). We hosted school students Daiver Giraldo Zamora and Kishan Gordon for a week in July 2024. We also had long-term regular volunteers, Carole and Michael Hembest and James Kotei who regularly gathered the views of patients in the community, along with new volunteers Natasha Fuller, Leah Tesfu and Latoya Dotse.
- Our local leadership board members are also volunteers (page 4). The Board sets the strategic direction for Healthwatch Croydon, analyses people's views and experiences, along with local and national policy developments, to identify priority areas for our focus, represents us on a range of boards, committees and groups, and supports our local team in their work.



Some board members and manager with Mayor Perry, Croydon's health and social care leaders, and some voluntary sector leaders at our Annual Meeting in November 2024.

A message from our Chair

One recent project involved working with the VCS Leadership Board and One Croydon Alliance to identify voluntary, community and faith organisations that deliver health or social care services that support Croydon residents. This project (page 16) identified more than 800 organisations involved locally, demonstrating the broad reach of active and involved community groups in Croydon enabling many local voices to be heard.

Since one of our priorities is amplifying seldom heard people's voices, being able to work in partnership with relevant community groups greatly enhances our ability to gather views from as many people as possible, as shown in our projects on the experiences of neurodiverse people (page 15), and when we spoke to vulnerable migrants about their experiences of health services (page 22).

2025/26 is already presenting the system with a range of challenges and opportunities including the NHS shift from hospital to community, analogue to digital and treatment to prevention; the development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams; the upcoming NHS 10-year plan, Integrated Care Board and NHS England financial and staffing reductions, and financial challenges for all statutory services. With your help we will continue to monitor the impact on local services and hold local decision-makers to account.

I thank the team for their work, the local leadership board and volunteers for their commitment, and stakeholders for their continued interest in our work, but most importantly thank you to Croydon's residents for sharing your experiences and views – gathering and analysing your views is at the heart of what we do, and we could not achieve what we do without you.



“With your help we will continue to monitor the impact on local services and hold local decision-makers to account.”

E. Morris

Edwina Morris, Healthwatch Croydon Chair

Our year in numbers

We've supported **1068** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **four** staff, and our work is supported by **18** volunteers.

Reaching out:



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

316 people came to us for advice, information and signposting on topics such as accessing and using general practice (doctors), hospital services, and adult social care.

Championing your voice:



We published **eight** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **health inequalities, virtual wards** and **eye services**. Our most wide-ranging report was on **Community Diagnostics Centre services**, where we heard from those using services in **Purley** and asked **New Addington** residents about what they need from the new centre, set to open there in summer 2025.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Croydon Council**. In 2024/25 we received **148,886** which is **£1,151 less** than last year.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Croydon. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Profiled the experiences of vulnerable migrants and what they needed from primary and secondary care services **(see page 22)**.



Held a public meeting to discuss the draft of the carers strategy and ensure it aligned with the experiences and views of carers. **(see page 31)**.



Summer

We published our report on the experience of virtual wards at Croydon University Hospital, a new way to support patients at home instead of in hospital wards. **(see page 18)**.



We spoke to 30 users of eye services about their experience of using services in Croydon to support a wider project by Healthwatch England **(see page 20)**.



Autumn

We compiled a report that mapped and heard views from the voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to help support delivery of health and social care services. **(see page 16)**.



We hosted within our Annual Meeting a section to understand Croydon residents' views about health inequalities. This provided insight for the new Health and Care Plan. **(see page 14)**.



Winter

We heard from users of the Community Diagnostics Centre in Purley and residents in New Addington about their views for a similar facility, due to be opened in summer 2025. **(see page 17)**.



Working with the Centre for Change we co-produced a Research Café for those from seldom-listened to groups to understand barriers to engaging in health research. **(see page 31)**.



Working together for change

We have worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Croydon are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at the South West London ICS.

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across South West London to achieve the following:

Representation on ICS board and committees:



Representation on the ICS board and sub-committees provides opportunities to share patient and public concerns with key NHS decision makers. We also hold the ICS to account and make sure they appropriately engage people before any big changes are made to services. Colleagues from across the ICS have asked us to help shape or improve their engagement plans, such as for the South West London Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment and for the South West London Earwax Removal Pilot.

Joint patient and public engagement:



We collaborated with our South West London Healthwatch colleagues on two joint engagement projects focused on the Accessible Information Standard and community health services. We are working with ICS decision makers to respond to what people have told us, to improve the quality, accessibility, and equality of these services for everyone.

Advocacy for improved dental commissioning:



In October 2024, we presented at the South West London Dentistry Day, contributing insights from national datasets as well as patient views (including Croydon) about the impact of costly dental experiences and low availability of NHS dentists. This presentation helped bring focused insights about the needs and experiences of local people to decision makers. We have been invited to participate in further discussions to increase equitable geographic distribution of NHS dentistry commissioning.

We have also summarised some of our other outcomes in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to health and social care professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in Croydon this year:

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

We presented the experiences of Croydon's vulnerable migrants. We showed how there were a wide range of migrants coming from four continents, escaping religious and political persecution, gang warfare and domestic abuse. We heard that they were supported well by dedicated primary care migrant services, but less so by secondary and mental health services.

Getting services to involve the public



By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

As part of our Annual Meeting, we hosted a discussion between residents and key health and social care stakeholders about what health inequalities meant to them and heard a range of views around service access. This was used to help form the new Croydon Health and Care Plan, to ensure that services are more responsive to the needs of all sections of the population.

Supporting better GP patient participation groups



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

Since December 2023, we have run Croydon's Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) Network to share knowledge, information, and best practice to support resident and patient engagement and participation for Croydon residents. Members include those who are committed to learning and sharing knowledge and experience. Healthwatch Croydon is now advising GP practices on how they can make the best use of their PPG to collect patient insight and improve services.

What our stakeholders say

Read about what Croydon's stakeholders say about working with Healthwatch Croydon

"Healthwatch Croydon have remained a valued part of the One Croydon Alliance, working alongside our community and voluntary partners and providing crucial insight into the experiences of those who use and need services. Their independent perspective continues to strengthen how we improve care.

"Throughout 2024–25, Healthwatch Croydon have delivered insightful work on a number of key areas. This includes further analysis of our virtual wards programme, a dedicated review of experiences at our community diagnostic centres, and a focus on the needs of residents from seldom-heard communities.

"Their role in providing challenge, advocacy and support ensures the voice of patients is at the heart of how we plan and deliver services. As we move toward a more integrated and community-based model of care, as outlined by the Government ahead of the NHS 10-Year Plan, whilst also carefully managing the decisions we take to ensure our financial sustainability and our quality, access and workforce objectives; our relationship with Healthwatch remains a vital part of what we do."

Matthew Kershaw,

**Chief Executive, Croydon Health Services NHS Trust
and Place-Based Leader for Health**

"Healthwatch Croydon is key to bringing the voices of our residents who access health and care in Croydon to the operational, transformational and commissioning work we do in Adult Social Care and Health at Croydon Council. They are an important and valuable part of our Adults Living Independently (ALI) partnership board, which is a transformation programme dedicated to enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults that I am responsible for.

"We work as an integrated care system; and as a system partner, Healthwatch Croydon gathered resident and patient insight around hospital discharge which supported the development of a better experience for people leaving hospital.

"I welcome their support and expertise at the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health and Social Care Scrutiny sub-committee; and I look forward to continuing our positive working relationship as I develop the Adult Social Care and Health service at Croydon, ensuring that our residents live healthier more independent lives for longer and those at risk of abuse or neglect are safe."

Annette McPartland,

Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, Croydon Council

What our stakeholders say

Read about what Croydon's stakeholders say about working with Healthwatch Croydon

"I have worked alongside Healthwatch for many years. As my critical friend as Chair, as a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and many other Boards on which they have an active role. They have been key in raising the important voice of the people. Looking at how residents receive key health services is so important to me in my role as the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care. This vital information helps me inform policy decisions and key service delivery in this sector. Thank you for all your great work once again."

Cllr Yvette Hopley,
Cabinet Lead for Health and Social Care, Croydon Council

"As Chair of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-committee, we commended Healthwatch Croydon's Annual Report 2023-24, which offers vital insights for our scrutiny sub-committee and Croydon's health priorities. Gordon Kay, Healthwatch Croydon's co-opted committee member, ensures our communities perspectives are central to our work.

"Healthwatch Croydon played a pivotal role in shaping our new Health and Wellbeing Strategy by conveying resident's needs and highlighting wider factors influencing health. Additionally, providing insights into the virtual ward barriers, particularly concerning technology and isolation for vulnerable individuals, which are already shaping local and national policy through the Health Innovation Network's wider research.

"We also note the lasting impact of the 'Empowering Black Communities Around Wellbeing' initiative, that was first reported in 2019, which has grown into a crucial Wellbeing Centre five years later and has received national recognition with a 'Commended' award from Healthwatch England.

"Healthwatch Croydon's diligent efforts and contributions are fundamental to our Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-committee's ability to ensure Croydon's health and social care services truly serve our diverse community."

Cllr Eunice O'Dame
Chair, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee, Croydon Council

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.

This year we have focused on a programme of activity from specific services such as community diagnostics, virtual wards, intermediate care and reablement services and eye care, to the experiences of those with specific conditions such as those with neurodiverse conditions and diabetes. We also engaged with communities on what they understood by health inequalities and also how the voluntary, social and faith sector could help support delivery of health and social care services in Croydon.



Listening to your experiences

Putting health inequalities as central to the Health and Care Plan

Healthwatch Croydon spoke to Croydon residents as part of our 2024 annual meeting to better understand perceived health inequalities.

Our discussion entitled '*Your Views on Health Inequalities*', highlighted a range of pervasive challenges for local communities. Utilising the NHS definition and Croydon's Health and Wellbeing Strategy as a framework, participants across ten tables spoke at length of perceived health barriers and solutions. Results were analysed into themes and helped to inform Croydon's Health and Care Plan.

What did we do?

We asked the people that came to our Annual Meeting to share their views on inequalities in local health services. The groups explored the health inequalities that they and people they know have experienced and shared improvements they would like to see with examples of where they knew such an approach was working.

Key things we heard:



Structural inequalities persist, participants felt there is a lack of holistic care, and barriers to access.

A lack of co-production and patient empowerment with suggestions that health services need to be more joined up and collaborative in their approach.

Community groups need more support. There is an unequal and disproportionate access to resources.

There were several opportunities highlighted as part of the analysis to help residents gain easier access to services through better communication and advocacy for marginalised groups. There also needs to be more co-production and integration to address social determinants and socioeconomic inequalities.

What difference did this make?

Our insight helped shape the strategy and was included with the final plan and has also helped shape discussions around neighbourhood care. The One Croydon project team said: "Healthwatch has played a vital role in shaping Croydon's approach to tackling health inequalities. Insights gathered through resident participation directly informed the development of the borough's Health and Care Plan. This collaborative effort has resulted in a targeted action plan to help close the gap in health outcomes." We continue to support delivery of this action plan.

Read the report at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news-and-reports

Listening to your experiences

Hearing from neurodiverse residents about their experience of services

Healthwatch Croydon spoke to the neurodiverse community in Croydon to better understand the challenges that persist for this diverse community.

A mapping of neurodiverse conditions revealed up to 30 different conditions. However, we found that there was much overlap across multiple neurodiverse conditions.

What did we do?

Our survey ran from January to May 2025 and spoke to multiple groups in Croydon offering a range of methods to help neurodiverse individuals participate, including one to one online and face to face conversation, digital and paper surveys, and a dedicated event. We heard from 29 respondents.

Key things we heard:



There are barriers around diagnosis and lack of post diagnosis care.

A lack of specific information for neurodiverse communities with some relying on AI for advice.

Some health professionals are not sufficiently trained to consider the patient's neurodiversity when treating them. Digital systems make for more challenging health services navigation.

Some with neurodiverse conditions feel emotionally exhausted at having to communicate their needs just to be heard and sometimes being dismissed by health professionals.

What difference will this make?

Our report makes recommendations to improve access to diagnosis, and post diagnosis support, including more resources for neurodiverse groups. There should also be more training for healthcare professionals, with community-led support that is peer-led, better communication, and enhanced mental health support. We will be taking these findings to key commissioners and stakeholders in the coming months and using what we heard to support service improvement.

Read the report at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news-and-reports

Listening to your experiences

Understanding how the voluntary sector can support health and social care

We mapped Croydon's voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) and heard their views on supporting health and social care services.

This study was commissioned by the One Croydon Alliance of Croydon Council, NHS services, and the Voluntary and Community Sector Leadership Board.

What did we do?

We mapped 834 organisations, including 765 charities and 69 community interest companies. We surveyed 111 of these organisations through telephone and online surveys. We then had further focused conversations with 45 organisations to hear about their strengths, challenges and opportunities.

Key things we heard:



17%

of all charities and CICs mapped in Croydon identified as Christian religious organisations.

42%

had annual income between £10k and £100k while 26% had annual income between £100k and £1m.

43%

of income received came from bids, grants and contracts from local authorities, NHS or others.

Our work showed that there was a committed VCFS keen to work with health and social care services to support community-based care, but there were concerns that more sustainable and reliable funding models were needed to enable these organisations to meet demand.

What difference did this make?

The One Croydon Alliance said: "Healthwatch produced a thorough report for the One Croydon Voluntary and Community Sector Leadership Board on the shape of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Croydon, demonstrating the diversity and strength of the sector in Croydon, looking at some of the gaps and making helpful recommendations that were presented to the One Croydon Health and Care Board, chaired by the Mayor of Croydon. The report has informed the next steps for representation of the VCFS in the One Croydon Alliance to ensure the sector's voice reflects the diverse assets captured through Healthwatch's engagement with organisations large and small across the borough."

Read the report at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news-and-reports

Listening to your experiences

Gaining insight to support wider expansion of community diagnostic services

Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) have been launched across England to offer diagnostic services closer to people's homes, reducing pressure on hospitals and helping identify serious illnesses early.

Croydon Health Services NHS Trust launched a CDC in Purley in January 2024, with a second scheduled to open in New Addington in the summer of 2025. In January 2025, the Trust commissioned Healthwatch Croydon to help understand the experiences of patients at Purley CDC, and to identify how the plans for the new site in New Addington could be adapted to suit the needs of residents.

What did we do?

We visited Purley CDC in February and surveyed 120 service users. To engage with residents in New Addington, we hosted a focus group with ten residents and ran a short online survey, receiving 40 responses, seeking to understand their views on the plans for the new CDC.

Key things we heard from those using Purley CDC:

48%

were not previously aware that they could have received their diagnostic test or scan at Purley CDC.

94%

found it easy or very easy to travel to Purley CDC.

52%

found their experience to be very good, with a further 38% stating it was good.

While residents in New Addington would use similar services as specified at Purley, they also wanted to see wider diagnostic services concerning blood tests as well children's services, MRI scans, and a minor injuries unit, as these are currently far from other Croydon services. Our report recommended improving signage at Purley, widening the services offered at the new CDC, improving communication to reassure residents of the wider impact of the plans on issues such as parking, and ensuring their views are heard.

What difference did this make?

Croydon Health Services NHS Trust have confirmed an action plan in response to our findings including a communications and engagement plan for both Purley and New Addington; improved signage and wayfinding at Purley; and a consideration of additional services in future service planning.

Read the report at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news-and-reports

Listening to your experiences

Hearing about the experience of virtual wards

Healthwatch Croydon provided insightful findings from a patient survey about the virtual wards and remote monitoring devices utilised by Croydon University Hospital.

The findings highlighted a strong preference for home-based care which indicates that many patients are open to considering the benefits of virtual wards.

What did we do?

We carried out a telephone-based patient interviews, which ran between January and May 2024 and included 30 patients who had used the service in Croydon.

Key things we heard:



87%

Patients preferred treatment at home in a virtual ward over hospital care.

63%

found information on virtual wards and remote monitoring useful, with most reporting clear communication from Croydon Hospital.

60%

rated their virtual ward experience as 'very good'.

Our report shows some patients who use this service value the benefits of applying digital technology like Virtual Wards to improve NHS patient experience and enabling more care at home. However, there were issues with using the kit and accessibility for those who do not speak English, or who have disabilities.

What difference did this make?

Croydon Health Service NHS Trust is investing in newer virtual wards kit which will be more responsive and will also be easier for patients to set up and use. They are also developing new communication materials to support both patient uptake and usage, including in various languages to support Croydon's residents, as well as easy read for those with learning disabilities and accessible formats for those with visual impairments. They are also working with consultants and GPs to increase the confidence in referring to virtual wards.

Read the report at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news-and-reports

Listening to your experiences

Listening to the experience of those using reablement and intermediate care services

Healthwatch Croydon sought to understand the experiences of individuals who have accessed reablement and intermediate Care services in Croydon.

Our aim was to identify what is working well, any challenges faced, and opportunities for improvement in the support provided during recovery and transition back to independence.

What did we do?

We interviewed a sample size of 17 participants across services such as intermediate care beds, short-term winter beds, reablement at home, and Living Independently For Everyone (LIFE) programme to support people to be more independent at home. The aim was to gather their experiences to help the NHS and Croydon Council improve its services using the insight we heard from patients.

Key things we heard:



85%

Had support from unpaid carers such as family and friends.

80%

Prefer to receive these services at home rather than in a care facility

50%

had clear goals for their recovery at the beginning of their intermediate care journey.

Our report recommends that carers should be recognised and supported and there needs to be better engagement with follow-up discussions when patients feel better. Discharge information needs to be tailored and accessible to patient's need and patients and families should receive clear and timely information on their support package post-discharge. Also, that post-discharge services should ideally be set within a person's home with care homes used only where necessary.

What difference will this make?

This was commissioned by the South West London Integrated Care System in partnership with Croydon Council. The insight gained will inform the redesign of intermediate care and reablement services and pathways and will also support wider learning on community services across South West London.

Read the report at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news-and-reports

Listening to your experiences

Contributing to national insight of eye services

Eye care is the busiest outpatient area in the NHS in England. Many patients experience long waiting times which have significant impact on daily living.

Healthwatch Croydon received funding from Healthwatch England to carry out surveys with patients who had current or recent experience of waiting for secondary eye care. Speaking with 30 eye clinic patients at Croydon University Hospital in September 2024, we found that most patients who were waiting for services had been on the waiting list for more than a year, and a third had experienced considerable deterioration in eyesight while awaiting care.

Key things we heard:



33%

of patients currently waiting for services had experienced “considerable deterioration” in vision.

83%

of patients waiting for secondary care had been offered no support – such as mental health or day-to-day living – while waiting.

25%

of patients currently waiting had attended multiple appointments before they were referred to a specialist.

“I consider that eye services are not ‘joined up’ and are inadequately integrated into my whole person care. For example, I have not been asked, nor talked about, my eyesight with my GP ever.”

Our report recommended improving the referral process by ensuring quality of care and integration of services, offering signposting for additional support in daily life, and reducing waiting times for care. Promoting local service providers in the community – a model initiated by Croydon some years ago – should also help improve experience.

What difference did this make?

Our findings contributed to Healthwatch England’s wider report, ‘A strain on sight: Waiting for NHS specialist eye care’, with data from a national survey and ten local Healthwatch. The reports and their recommendations have been very warmly received by stakeholders, including those from the eyecare community. We have also shared this with local stakeholders so they can consider improvements to their current services and patient experiences in secondary eye care and will follow up developments in the coming year.

Read the report at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news-and-reports

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Croydon. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Hearing from vulnerable migrants and sharing their experiences with local NHS.
- Gaining views and experience from Black African and Black Caribbean users of diabetes services.
- Co-producing a Research Café for underrepresented groups to understand their needs.



Hearing from all communities

Hearing from vulnerable migrants about their use of primary and secondary care services.

We heard the views of 58 vulnerable migrants from 24 countries across 4 continents about their experiences of using health services and shared this with key commissioners and service providers.

They told us about how they found the dedicated primary care service very helpful, but accessing and using secondary care services was more challenging.

What difference did this make?

The dedicated service continues to serve vulnerable migrants. Key information is being updated and will be shared with new arrivals through their induction and information meetings. NHS Croydon continues to promote Doctors of the World's Safe Surgeries and is working with GPs around registering patients. Referrals to children's and adult's mental health services are being supported through the dedicated primary care service.

Hearing from those using diabetes services from Croydon's Black African and Black Caribbean communities

These communities have a higher-than-average prevalence towards type 2 diabetes but are underrepresented in uptake to service. We heard from 82 people about their experiences of diagnosis and support.

They told us that for many it was a silent disease, and that they need dedicated support working through face-to-face interactions via community organisations such as churches. Information and support needed to reflect the varied cuisine differences of African and Caribbean cultures both in GP and community settings.

What difference will this make?

This report will help support community prevention and support initiatives around diabetes for these communities. We are looking to work with Croydon's Director of Public Health and other health service stakeholders including the community and voluntary sector. This can also support wider London and national initiatives.

Read the reports at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news-and-reports

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 316 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust.
- Helping people access the services they need.
- Supporting people to look after their health.
- Signposting people to additional support services.



Helping patients get the support they need

Thanks to Mr N contacting us, we helped him get his health concerns acknowledged by both GP and hospital in a setting that was right for him.

Mr N contacted us through the enquiry line, frustrated with the lack of support from Croydon University Hospital and struggling to secure a face-to-face appointment. He felt his health concerns were being neglected and was unsure how to escalate his issues.

In response, our information team member raised a formal complaint on Mr N's behalf, initiating an investigation into his case. Additionally, they contacted his GP practice, speaking directly with one of the doctors to arrange a discussion for Mr N to address his concerns. This allowed him to express his needs more clearly and receive better support from his healthcare providers

Mr N is now satisfied with the outcome. The formal complaint and direct communication with his GP significantly improved his experience with Croydon University Hospital, restoring his confidence in making complaints.

“Thank you, I felt that I have been listened to.”



Helping a patient

Mrs C had concerns about the quality of care she and her daughter were receiving from their GP. The practice acknowledged the issues and assigned them a new GP.

She felt that the GP lacked the necessary expertise to address their medical issues, leaving them both frustrated and uncertain about their treatment. Our information team member wrote a formal complaint to the GP practice on behalf of Ms C, outlining the issues they had experienced. The practice responded, acknowledging the concerns and promising an investigation. As a result, Ms C and her daughter were assigned to a new GP within the practice, who was better equipped to address their needs,

Ms C is now satisfied with the outcome. The changes have led to improved care for both Ms C and her daughter, positively resolving their concerns.

“You are strong women, without you this was not going to happen.”



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic **18 volunteers** have given **705 hours, or 94 days** to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote our work.
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Represented Healthwatch at key committees and meetings.
- Led the delivery of specific reports from design to implementation and delivery.



Healthwatch Croydon's student volunteers in discussion with Mayor Perry and Yemisi Gibbons, Chair of Croydon Health Services NHS Trust at the One Croydon Health and Care Board.

Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

"The whole volunteering with Healthwatch has been one enjoyable aspect. I know that though it was only 50 hours of placement, it was very informative. I feel I have got to learn new skills. Having been part of this organisation has been a privilege for me. I think I have taken the most out of it and I have contributed. Some of the skills that I have learned were working under pressure and overcoming barriers to communication with some of the patients we've spoken to during the outreach. Being part of a team and getting to know the team in such a short notice of time and fitting in with the team, along with my (student) colleague who volunteered, show me that you can absolutely do it.

Oktawia – Croydon University Centre student volunteer 2025



"I have been a resident of Croydon for the majority of my life. I became a Healthwatch volunteer in order to help my community, and to also give back in some way. I have volunteered for quite some time. I enjoy working with the organisation, and I know we do valuable work that is needed in the community. All of the volunteers and the staff are friendly and helpful."

James – volunteer since 2018



See more about our volunteers at
www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news/2025-06-02/big-thank-you-our-public-health-student-volunteers

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk



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Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Croydon Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Croydon Council	£148,886	Expenditure on pay	£120,262
Additional income	£36,015	Non-pay expenditure	£16,520
		Office and management fee	£48,119
Total income	£184,901	Total Expenditure	£184,901

Additional income is broken down into:

- £20,000 from the One Croydon Alliance for mapping and surveying Croydon's voluntary, community and faith sector.
- £5,000 received from Croydon Health Services NHS Trust for the Community Diagnostics Centre project.
- £1,675 from South West London Research Engagement Network for co-hosting a Research Café with Centre of Change.
- £1,000 from Healthwatch England for research on Eye services in Croydon.
- £800 for hosting the Healthwatch England London Network in Croydon.

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Supporting the South West London Executive Team	£4,000
Community service project on intermediate care and reablement	£3,540

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

With so much change in health care being initiated at the national level, the continuing impact of financial challenges across health and social care, and the impending release of the NHS 10-year plan, it has been difficult for Healthwatch Croydon to identify which areas of health and social care to prioritise for the next few months. Issues currently being considered include:

- **Community Pharmacies**
- **Unidentified carers of people with mental health conditions**
- **Access to services for adults with learning disabilities**
- **Residents' experiences of sexual health services**
- **Residents' experiences of hospital discharge and support after discharge**

In addition, we will continue to hold outreach sessions across the borough to hear from local people about their experiences of health and care services, which helps us to identify future priorities for further work and will seek further opportunities to work with partners.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Croydon, 24 George Street, Croydon CR0 1PB is managed by Public Voice, Tottenham Town Hall, Town Hall Approach Road, London, N15 4RX. 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.

The Healthwatch Croydon local leadership board consists of seven members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities (see page 4 for more details). Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2024/25, the Board met 12 times and made decisions on matters such as agreeing to our workplan of the year, which included the projects presented in this annual report. Three new board members were inducted in April 2024. The board held elections and Edwina Morris was reelected chair and Sandra Dodgson became Deputy Chair in the autumn of 2024.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2024-25, we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended a range of virtual meetings of community groups and fora, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media, as well as some outreach sessions. We also established a Croydon Patient Participation Group Network to understand patient needs and support patient representation and participation. 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, speaking to the Black African and Caribbean community about diabetes services. (see page 22).

Enter and view

Healthwatch Croydon did not undertake any Enter and View during 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. However, our Chair regularly attended the Croydon Safeguarding Adults Board and Intelligence Sharing Group which oversees and addresses issues and concerns raised about regulated care services.

Statutory statements

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, including printed copies distributed at our Annual Meeting and when we engage in the community

Responses to recommendations

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations..

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insight and experiences that have been shared with us. In our local authority area for example we take information to Croydon Council, Croydon Health and Wellbeing Board, Croydon Health and Care Board, Croydon Health Service NHS Trust Board and Croydon's Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee. We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in South West London ICS (see page 9 for more detail). We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Croydon is represented on the Croydon Health and Wellbeing Board by Edwina Morris, Chair of Healthwatch Croydon. During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by actively supporting the development of the Health and Wellbeing Board strategy and contributed to discussions particularly around the planning for the Better Care Fund, Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Croydon' Carers Strategy. Healthwatch Croydon also presented our Annual Report in March 2025.

Gordon Kay, Healthwatch Croydon Manager is co-opted as a member of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee and presents reports at each meeting. In the past year, he presented the Annual Report, asylum seeker report, virtual wards report. At One Croydon Health and Care Board, where he is non-voting attendee, he contributed insight to discussions of Health and Care plan based on dedicated insight on inequalities. He also co-presented the voluntary, community and faith sector report.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch representative at ICB

Healthwatch Croydon is represented on South West London Integrated Care Partnerships and Integrated Care Boards (ICB) by Alyssa Chase Vilchez, South West London Healthwatch Executive Lead.

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

This lists the outcomes as a result our work this year

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Vulnerable migrants – June 2024	The dedicated service continues to serve vulnerable migrants. Key information is being updated and will be shared with new arrivals through their induction and information meetings. NHS Croydon continues to promote Doctors of the World Safe Surgeries and is working with GPs around registering patients. Referrals to children's and adult's mental health services are being supported through the dedicated primary care service.
Carers strategy event – June 2024	The Carers Strategy Lead accepted that some aspects needed more clarification and a greater focus on mental health. The final text was revised again before publication. A dedicated mental health carers forum has now been established to support carers looking after those with mental health conditions.
Virtual wards – September 2024	Croydon Health Service NHS Trust is investing in newer virtual wards kit which will be more responsive and easier for patients to set up and use. They are also developing new communication materials to support both patient uptake and usage including in various languages to support Croydon's residents, as well as easy read for those with learning disabilities and visual impairments. They are also working with consultants and GPs to increase confidence in referring to virtual wards.
Health inequalities at Annual meeting – November 2024	Our insight helped shape the strategy and was included with the final plan and has also helped shape discussions around neighbourhood care. The One Croydon project team recognised the vital role in shaping Croydon's approach to tackling health inequalities. Insights gathered through resident participation directly informed the development of the borough's Health and Care Plan. This collaborative effort has resulted in a targeted action plan to help close the gap in health outcomes.
Croydon's voluntary, social and faith sector – March 2025	The One Croydon Alliance said that the report demonstrated the diversity and strength of the voluntary sector. It has informed the next steps for representation of the VCS in the One Croydon Alliance to ensure the sector's voice reflects the diverse assets captured through Healthwatch's engagement with organisations large and small across the borough.
Research Café – March 2025	This event helped the South West London Research Network understand the validity of using Research Café models to engage with underrepresented groups. It helped academic researchers at Kingston University understand how the model could be effectively used.
Eye Services – March 2025	Our findings contributed to Healthwatch England's wider report, <i>A strain on sight: Waiting for NHS specialist eye care</i> , with data from a national survey and ten local Healthwatch. The reports and their recommendations have been warmly received by stakeholders, including those from the eyecare community. We also now share this with local stakeholders so they can consider improvements to their current services and patient experiences in secondary eye care.
Community Diagnostics Centre – June 2025	Croydon Health Services NHS Trust have confirmed an action plan in response to our findings including a communications and engagement plan for both Purley and New Addington, improved signage and wayfinding at Purley and a consideration of additional services in future service planning.
Intermediate care and reablement services – June 2025	This was commissioned by the South West London Integrated Care System in partnership with Croydon Council. The insight gained will inform the redesign of intermediate care and reablement services and pathways and will also support wider learning on community services across South West London.
Croydon PPG Network – ongoing	Increase profile by presenting at both Croydon GP collaborative meeting and monthly Croydon NHS GP call. This has led to responses from practices to get involved on the PPG network and for Healthwatch to advise them.

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to quality**