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# What we're hearing about Guildford and Waverley

November 2023

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## Report overview

This report has been designed to share with the Guildford and Waverley Alliance to highlight what local people are talking to Healthwatch Surrey about. It includes quotes to provide context to themes that we have identified. This report is not designed to be a representative portrayal of individual services. We have provided details of providers for context, multiple references to a service may be a result of our community engagement taking place within a certain area, rather than being indicative of a particular concern with a specific provider.

We have identified a number of themes from our conversations with residents:

- During our visits to community locations, we have heard about the support being given to residents by community organisations.
- We spoke to young people in Farncombe about where they would turn to if they have questions about health services.
- People attending the Hongkongers group in Guildford have told us how language barriers can affect their access to care.
- We have heard that when people are receiving care, they are often happy with the quality, however, communication could be improved.
- People have also shared their experiences of perceived stigma related to their needs, care at Royal Surrey County hospital, receiving care at home, trying to access general practice, community pharmacies and vaccinations.

Any urgent or concerning experiences within this report have been escalated to the appropriate teams. All appropriate information and advice and signposting to complaints processes has already been given.

If you would like more information or examples of what people have shared, please get in touch.

## Recommendations

1. We recommend that the Alliance considers how to encourage young people to use reliable sources for information about their health.
2. We recommend that information about local services is made available in Cantonese in order to help this community understand and access services more easily.
3. There are a number of examples where more effective communication with people using services would improve their overall experience. We recommend that the Alliance considers how to improve messaging, that is going out to people using services whilst also considering feedback on what currently works well.
4. During one of our visits to a community location, there was a first aid emergency that we were able to assist with. We recommend that the support and assistance offered to community groups across Guildford and Waverley is reviewed in order to enable them to offer the support that their service users may need.
5. We recommend that Guildford and Waverley Alliance consider and share any other actions related to the experiences shared within this report.

## Community support

Through our community engagement strategy, we aim to listen to what matters to local people as well as providing information and signposting. We visit local community-based groups and talk to people using services as well as those running services about the vital support they provide keeping people well in the community.

“I feel that the community helps me ward off mental health issues. I go for walks with friends and come to the events at the Baptist church.”

**203427**

"It's really busy at the youth clubs and sessions we run. It shows a high need for youth services in the area, and we offer a safe space for local young people."

**Youth Centre worker**

"I come to Open Grounds to help my mental health. There is lots going on here – classes and courses. I'm able to do them for free. Christians Against Poverty have helped me with my finances and I use Zero Guildford community fridge for food. I support my mum, who has Alzheimer's."

**203404**

"I had a stroke about a year ago, I'm now in a wheelchair, my life has completely changed. I come along here [Farncombe Day Centre] twice a week, I said no way to start with. I didn't want to hang out with the oldies, but they suggested I came along and try it. It was getting to me, being at home all the time. I've had fun coming here, I get out, I can talk to other people and they do a cracking lunch."

**203101**

The day centre is really busy we have a lot of people coming over from the other side of Godalming too. There is [another] day centre, but they've put prices up which is putting people off using it. People are travelling over here rather than going there. People tell us they love the community feeling of the day centre here, we do over and above our day centre remit and help people when we can... We support vulnerable adults in the community; we work a lot with the people who live in the sheltered housing behind Farncombe day centre. We support with booking GP appointments, booking COVID jabs and flu jabs. We also help by doing things online for them. We also organise help with shopping. I sometimes feel that I'm more like a social worker and we find most of the people we're supporting do not have any families of their own to help them."

**Day Centre Manager**

"I started being involved [with Homestart] when I had my first baby and things were too much for me. I still come to Homestart regularly and although I don't need support as much now, I know it's there if I need it. I've become friends with other mums and this is a great place for us to meet and for the children to play and become friends too. It's a great organisation that makes sure we are all doing ok and if we are feeling overwhelmed, we can talk it through."

**202391**

This person's contacts with a number of services demonstrates the importance of ensuring that transitioning across services works well to provide continuity in support:

The perinatal mental health team were really good. I'm discharged from them now but before they did that, they linked me with Homestart. She is part of a child-in-need plan as I was homeless and there was domestic violence too. I come to this group [Homestart] and I also have a lady from Homestart every Thursday for an hour, so she looks after my [child] while I attend an online counselling course with a psychologist. I had quite a wait for this.

I was really anxious and nervous about being discharged from the perinatal service. They do this as soon as your child is one. They had been so supportive and helpful to me; I didn't know where I would be referred to next and that was worrying. I had such a lovely safeguarding midwife at Royal Surrey [County Hospital]. I was also homeless, and she helped to get me a home by writing supportive letters to the housing people, as did my GP.

I was living on the floor [of a relative's house]. I then lived in a car for a while as well. I am also in touch with the SW [Do we know the full name for this?] domestic violence service. They actually came and visited me in hospital as my baby was premature. My situation was picked up by the hospital when I went for a scan. I really think that more funding is needed for the perinatal service. They were just wonderful. They

helped me with benefit advice, got me housed and also told me about other things like Healthy start... It would be great if their service could continue for longer than a year. It did make me anxious thinking about what I would do without their help and support. Homestart have also been wonderful but again, apparently I'm only going to have the individual lady from there for a while longer. It was meant to end when my [child] was 1 but they did a review and felt that I still needed to have her while I was still doing my counselling. I'm already worried that she will stop coming but they said I have her for at least another 3 months and then they will review again. They did reassure me that they wouldn't just stop her if I really did need her. I also come to the group here which is great. It's lovely that the staff are always the same as that consistency is really important. Everyone who comes here is in the same situation. There's no judgement, just help, advice and fun.

The midwife at the hospital also referred me to Stripey Stork who gave me a Moses basket for the baby and clothes. They were wonderful too.

I went to Wiggles and Giggles which was here as well and is for babies who can't walk. Again, it was nice to come to a familiar setting and I think the baby likes it too.

My only issue has been with the breastfeeding team at Royal Surrey. It turns out that my baby is lactose intolerant but they were so pushy. They were making me express and feed her but she was crying and once she had blood in her nappy. I was so upset as I thought they might think that I had done something to her, but it was my breastmilk making her ill. They just wouldn't listen to me. Now she's on the prescription milk and she's fine. But at the time it was so, so stressful."

**201915**

We also heard about the opportunities being provided to young people and how they are directly involved in reaching more young people through the work of the Broadwater youth centre:

“We are currently working on a bus project; the idea is to go out to Rodborough and other areas like Ockford Ridge. Our idea is sell toasties and hot chocolates out of the bus, targeting young people who don't want to engage at the youth club. We have been researching and figuring out how it can really work. We had been offering free hot meals on a Friday but the kids we are working with here don't really need that kind of service... So, we looked at involving them in the bus project, they help us to plan the menu and test it here, **we will help them to get their Health and Hygiene certificate and we thought they can do a bit of work experience on the bus with us if they want to. The benefit to them is that it would help them to get a part time job** and selling the toasties/ hot chocolates will help to fund the project.”

**Youth Centre Worker**

## Where do young people get information from?

We visited Broadwater Youth Centre to hear what young people's experiences of health and care are. We asked them where they go for information and advice relating to healthcare and they told us where they would turn to if they had questions:

“I'd chat to my parents or friends if I needed to ask about health information. I suppose it depends on what I was wanting to know... I probably wouldn't go to the wellbeing hub at school. If I was going to have a health conversation, I would prefer face to face, I feel confident talking for myself... I suppose I would Google if I couldn't chat with a person. But I know Google isn't always right, so any website you suggest would be great.” [He liked the idea of being able to text questions to chat health or be able to text Kooth.]

**203486, Year 9 student**

“My favourite counsellor has gone... I'm gutted, she was my favourite... I suppose I could chat to a teacher but it's just all so awkward. There isn't anyone else there at the moment



and I don't know if I would want to speak to someone new, like I said it's awkward. I'm nervous about speaking to someone else. [asked what would make less nervous]. Knowing them would be good, making it less like talking to a teacher, trusting them and them listening. Talking to a teacher you never know if you can trust them and talking with a counsellor, I don't know how to describe it, it's like you are an equal and you can chat equally without worrying. I would definitely want a female to talk too, especially as you know, sometimes it's something, you know, is personal. A younger youth worker is best, they've experienced what we have experienced more recently and that makes them more approachable. I like [named youth worker at Broadwater youth club] I would talk to her, she's used to me moaning at her, but she's amazing, she always listens... I could speak to my mum but if I wanted to know something and not ask it would be the old 'incognito mode' Google search on my phone. Websites? Wiki How for me."

**203468**

"I'd ask my Dad or my friends if I wanted information or advice, I wouldn't go to the wellbeing centre at school. If I needed to know something and didn't want to ask I'd Google, we'd all use Google - we love Google [asked which kind of websites would choose] I'd just look at the top websites that came up." [Chatted about 'safe' websites to look on about health. Talked about NHS websites but also wrote down Kooth and Chat health as optional websites to go to.]

**203467**

We also heard that young people take on worries about their family:

"My main worry at the moment is that my Dad is not too good, we don't know what the matter is. He had tests the other day and he's had loads of appointments at the doctors and at the hospital. It's really worrying not knowing what's wrong and he doesn't know himself."

**203486**

## Spotlight on a community: Hongkongers

We visited the Hongkongers; a peer support group aimed at supporting residents of Guildford and Waverley who are originally from Hong Kong. We were able to find a translator to accompany our visit, however, we heard that it can be difficult to get translation support and people often have to rely on family members. We recommend that information about local services is made available in Cantonese in order to help this community understand and access services more easily.

“My GP is Woodbridge Hill. I have requested interpreter several times, none are ever available. What do I do if I need to see the doctor, I can't wait to get better? GP talks too fast, I cannot understand them. I've had to go to appointments without an interpreter. Medical terminology is so difficult as it is, I have to guess! I would like to see my own patient records.”

**203812**

“I worry that I would delay a diagnosis if I waited weeks for an interpreter. We would like to Google prescriptions so we know what we are getting.”

**203819**

“I walk in [to GP] because when on the phone it is confusing because I can't make myself understood. I often do get seen the same day but have tried twice to get an appointment last time around. I don't speak good English. Recently had a blood test and they ended up losing my sample so had to do it again. I think I am not allowed to get an appointment online.

I requested an interpreter for Royal Surrey County Hospital [after a referral from GP] and got one. But then the second time I needed one, I arrived and found out when I arrived that the interpreter was supposed to join online and they

didn't. There was no other opportunity to get one. My son came with me and was able to help me but most of the time he is at university.

Takes a long time to see the consultant. The consultant called me but I missed the call. I listened to the voicemail and didn't understand, they spoke too quickly. I was then referred to another department but the system was not updated with my records and I didn't know where I was moved to or where I am waiting for a procedure. Wish I had more text messages or letters regarding appointment booking so I can then show someone and get them translated."

**203805**

We also heard that this can put a burden on people who are taking responsibility for others and who may possibly need additional support for themselves:

"I hadn't thought of my self as a carer at all. I came here today to translate for my parents. My mum can understand a little English and speak a little. When she goes to the doctors, she does know that she can ask for an interpreter but if there isn't one available, then I go with her and to the hospital.

I'm at university locally, so I can do this if I don't have lectures but it's fitting it all in. I also have suffered from mental health issues myself and try to keep myself well by playing sport. I do also have friends who are not well mentally at the moment. As I have been there myself, I do now try to help them too.

So, I guess, when I talk about who I support, I could be a carer. It's been good to talk to you and know that if I do need help and support then there is an Action for Carers Surrey. I do also know who to talk to at university."

**203505, Guildford resident**

The people we spoke to had expectations of what is provided by the NHS:

“Just arrived here. How do [CQC (Care Quality Commission)] ratings work? Don't want to choose a surgery that doesn't have a Cantonese speaking doctor, how do I choose one?”

**203816**

## Communication from services

We have heard that when people are receiving care, they are often happy with the quality, however, communication with them could be improved. We have included some examples below.

### Mental health services

“I go to Farnham Road Hospital for therapy monthly. I don't have to wait too long when I'm there. I have a really good relationship with my psychiatrist but there is a shortage of therapists which is a shame. There needs to be better co-ordination when booking appointments. I don't know how to chase up for information as I often don't get an email or a letter through. I would like updates on results and appointments, or to even know if there is going to be a delay would help my anxiety.”

**203446**

“When she came out of [Farnham Road] hospital, my daughter was under the care of the recovery team at Farnham Road. We had to fight to get her this help. She is still waiting to be referred to a psychologist. She did have someone but then it stopped. We've been ringing both Farnham Road and social services but can never get through – we're told that the person we need to speak to are in meetings every time we call. They seem to have a “nothing to do with me” attitude... She has no other real mental health support now. We've tried Oakleaf for counselling for her but we couldn't get a referral appointment on a day that either my wife or I can take her as we both still work full time.”

**202311**

## Royal Surrey

"I was in Royal Surrey County Hospital for a bowel blockage – they were quick to do the tests, but then getting the GP to give over the results was slow! I never received a letter from the hospital about the appointment. It feels like the system is broken."

**203436**

"I am currently waiting for a dermatology appointment at Royal Surrey County Hospital. I received an appointment for June and when I turned up for my appointment, I was told that they were not expecting me. I was sent away and was told I would get an appointment for December. I have received no notification yet so I will phone the hospital to find out when my appointment is."

**202299**

"I have been waiting since February for an ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) appointment for my now 4 year old at Royal Surrey County Hospital. We had an appointment booked for September which was cancelled by letter a week before – I assume because of the strikes but this was not confirmed in the letter. 1 month later and I have received no further communication– I have no idea if this will be rearranged if I need to take further action or how much longer we might be waiting. Considering I started this process a year ago with the GP, it's incredibly frustrating and concerning that we are no further along. What will the long-term impact be on my child's health?"

**202006**

## General Practice

"Last year when I was in my first university year, I didn't know how to register for a GP, so I didn't.

My friend told me about Guilddowns recently and I have completed their registration form but have heard nothing back for over 2 weeks. How do I know I am in the system?"

**202171**

“Who is supposed to give carers information? I thought there was meant to be a carers lead in every GP surgery... I've been trying to get my personal health budget since April 23 and every time I ring [Fairlands], I'm told she's busy or not there. She never returns my calls. I last phoned 2 weeks ago. Still nothing.”

**202041**

## When people's needs are met

Other people have told us where communication works well for them and it tends to be different for different people, with some preferring written information and other preferring to receive text messages.

“I like that the GP has a dispensary, it's really useful and they use a text system which is great.”

**203430**

“Communication from services, I like text or email, letters arrive from hospital after the text, but give more information. One of the things I've noticed, with every letter is that I receive a form asking for any changes of details, but not once has anyone asked for this form when I've gone along to an appointment or followed up to ask about it.”

**203335**

## Royal Surrey County Hospital

In September 2023, we shared 3 unpaid carers' experiences of care at Royal Surrey County Hospital and received confirmation that the trust would share and learn from these experiences. In addition, we have been visiting all of the acute hospitals in Surrey to talk to people about their attitudes towards sharing feedback. We have shared the results of our visit to St Luke's Cancer Centre and received a response from the trust. The report can be found here: [What we're hearing about St Luke's Cancer Centre at Royal Surrey County Hospital – July 2023](#)

During our community engagement sessions and through our information and advice service, people often share their experiences of care with us. These tend to be varied and cover a number of different departments which means there are often no overriding themes. We have included some examples below to illustrate what people share with us:

“My husband has cancer and needed surgery. He had excellent treatment at Royal Surrey. The follow up has been brilliant and he has check-ups regularly.”

**203429**

“Recently had double vision and my GP referred me to Royal Surrey County Hospital for an eye check-up in their eye clinic. Was referred quickly. I’ve had both cataracts done. Was home same day after surgery at Royal Surrey.”

**203026**

“I visit the eye clinic at Royal Surrey County Hospital annually. They have improved a lot as I was experiencing really long wait times but it's been much quicker this time around.”

**202200**

“Day surgery was organised at Royal Surrey County Hospital I thought it was jolly good care and the staff were good. Post surgery I was given information and I had physio but they pretty much leave you in the hands of your GP. The post op follow-up appointment was cancelled last minute, I think that was down to strikes and I appreciate they are very busy and cancellations happen. I found the appointment system is a bit clunky though, my appointment being cancelled resulted in me phoning round to sort things out which creates problems and frustrations for patients, having to call multiple times and speak to different people. My next appointment was changed 2 days before from Guildford to Haslemere. These last-minute changes do impact you, living in Gomshall it would have been better if I could have gone to Cranleigh, which is much nearer. I didn't feedback directly to the hospital, if I do feedback I will wait until the last

appointment and then explain, as you may feedback something good only for then it to go wrong or have had poor experience of booking but a good experience of care.”

**203335**

“We had been waiting 6 months for a referral to ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) for my 8-year-old daughter who has been complaining of hearing difficulties and tinnitus. In this time we have been seen at Woking Community Hospital for 2 hearing tests which showed glue ear and a subsequent drop in hearing. At the time of the second test they weren't sure why we were there as we were awaiting an ENT appointment at Royal Surrey County Hospital and were told they would repeat the whole thing but be able to help with the tinnitus.

My daughter was pinning her hopes on the ENT appointment to officially diagnose and offer support and ways to cope. It's been affecting much of her life at school, creating anxiety and worries in class about not being able to hear properly. So she was left incredibly upset and disappointed following the appointment. She did have to repeat the hearing test which showed a further decline in her hearing, but when we were called in to speak to the consultant, this was dismissed along with the previous results as all being in the normal range, despite the audiologist at Woking and Royal Surrey County Hospital saying it wasn't. My daughter also didn't feel listened to - the consultant asked when the tinnitus was worst and then ignored my daughter when she answered and then only directed her conversation directly to me. Just the physical turning to face me made it very difficult for my daughter to understand let alone hear what was going on.

We were with the consultant for about 2 minutes before being told we'll hear back again and being told to go to bed with the window open to hear traffic noise (not thinking whether this was appropriate given we live in a quiet area). It all felt very rushed and dismissive. When you've waited admittedly only 6months but had almost daily



conversations about how a doctor may be able to help and make things better, it was a big blow to my daughter to come out of there confused and ignored.”

**203296**

“I gave birth to my daughter, now 3 months at the Royal Surrey. I have had both my children there and received the best care possible. Before being left with a student, the senior midwife asked if I would be ok with a student taking care of me. Of course, I didn’t mind; everyone has to learn, and this was my second baby. The senior midwife was always contactable and kept popping in to see how things were going. I wanted a water birth but couldn’t, the student nurse did everything possible to make it special, she even brought in some fairy lights and made the room special for me. I couldn’t have asked for better care and attention.”

**202391**

## Perceived stigma

People have told us that they still believe there is a stigma attached to having specific needs and don’t feel that they are treated fairly as a result:

“There needs to be a massive improvement in mental health services in hospitals. I feel I get treated differently because of my history of mental health. I often feel I don’t get listened to or taken seriously. About a month ago I went to hospital because I was vomiting violently, but they didn’t really listen to me. I think staff need more training to treat people with mental health issues equally to those with physical health problems.

Emerge is a great mental health service in the hospital for young people. A bit like Community Angels. I would like to see more of these in the NHS.”

**203446**

“No one cares once they get you on Script. I am with I-Access at Farnham Road. I get no follow-up care, no

support. I've got no hope of coming off Methadone. Being in Guildford gives I-Access a problem. No one know how to look after me, talk to me."

**201937**

## Receiving care at home

It can be a big step for people to receive care at home. During our visits to day centres, we heard from many people about the importance of staying independent at home and not having anyone else providing care. We also heard from people who do receive care at home.

This person has told us that they are happy with the support given, however, they would appreciate knowing when carers are attending:

"They're a great support but there is a lack of staff and I never know when they are coming in."

**203446**

We have also heard from this person who is concerned about the care their friend is receiving and they weren't sure who to share these concerns with:

"A friend fell last week in her home, downstairs and went to Royal Surrey County Hospital and stayed in a few days. She was discharged and now has Caremark coming in 3 times a day.

The carers are not listening to her when she asks to clean her feet. This was one of her concerns and she asked them to and they said no. They also have moved her downstairs because she had a fall, yet she fell downstairs and has a stair lift. She is very vulnerable and being taken advantage of. She wants to be in her bed upstairs, not living in her dining room."

**202895**

The Giving Carers a Voice service (also part of Luminus) also hears from carers about the support they receive at home:

"I live with my 21 year old son who is sight impaired and autistic. We have just started using the Crossroads Care Surrey respite service. The person who is assigned to my son can't drive and so I have to collect and take him home. By the time I do this, it doesn't give me much time to have a break myself. I think I'll have to tell him that I can't do this anymore. It's great though as it's the only support I get. Please don't take it away."

**202396**

## GP access routes

From our conversations with people, it still appears that people are not familiar with processes for contacting their GP.

"I've used online before but more recently when I've gone to do that the forms weren't available, I don't understand why it's different now [discussed forms being switched on and off and reasons why]. Whilst I work, I can't use my phone and if they are switched on at those times that means online isn't the best option for me unless it's a day off. This is my first day off in the week for ages."

**203464**

Some people's comments suggest that they are being discouraged from using some routes and people sometimes feel that they can't or shouldn't try to book appointments in person:

"My surgery is Guilddowns, The Oaks surgery. I called recently about something but I have also walked in to book in the past. When booking I call or walk in, I don't have the patience to wait on the phone, [discussed call back service]. I live nearby and so **if I can't get through on the phone I go in and usually someone takes pity on me.**"

**203464**

“I find accessing my surgery hard. We are encouraged not to phone. You can only book to go in the triage system, by going online and registering between 6am and 12pm. What if I was ill in the afternoon? Guess we would try and phone... When you submit a form online, the request came back with an answer by text. And we missed this a few times. I've since requested we get communicated via text and email. We missed appointments because of this.”

**201938**

This person has also told us how their needs are not being met and how conflicting information undermines their trust in what they are being told:

“I just wanted to report an issue with my surgery, I have just spoken to Surrey Heartlands. Basically I am with Merrow Park Surgery, they used to be very good now they won't make any appointments unless you phone at 8 am to make an appointment for the same day. I have talked to the Practice Manager and they made an appointment for me. I called today and they said my GP was not available and to call back tomorrow, the practice has said it is government led, I have contacted NHS England they said this was untrue they looked online and it said GPs have to deal with patient on first contact, I said this to the Practice Manager and they agreed this was the case. I had the same conversation this morning with the receptionist and she said it was government led and she then said no it was the way it had been decided by the practice. I asked to speak to the manager, he's not available but the receptionist had just spoken to him so they are lying to me about him not being available. I sent an email from the MIND website and sent an email to ask for reasonable adjustments to make an appointment,. I sent the email and he came back to me and said they do allow patients to contact us online to make an appointment but it is still an appointment on the same day. Because of my issues I need time to formulate questions and plan for my appointment and find it really stressful having to phone or contact them on the day. They said they

have no plans to change the way things are done and I still have to contact in the same way. I wrote to the Practice Manager to explain this doesn't work for me due to brain fog, other problems but I have not yet received a reply."

**202265**

People who do feel very well supported have also shared their stories highlighting where things are working well:

"I have borderline personality disorder. Guildowns on Wodeland Road is my GP practice and they are great. They take me seriously and communicate well. I get texts to regularly come in for checkups. I never feel I go under the radar."

**203446**

"My GP is Guildowns in Park Barn. Since the pandemic, I've found it difficult to get an appointment. They are great at checking in every year with me though."

**203440**

"Shere surgery is great, great care. We've used the 'ask my GP' service at Shere. It's easy to get an appointment, I can e-mail in the morning, appointments can be face to face, video call or a telephone conversation whichever is appropriate and I think that's amazing. I've used the NHS App... but it's not needed for repeat prescriptions as we have the brilliant Brenda the Vendor in Shere – a vending machine outside the GP surgery which we can get our medication from. It's a great system and works really well."

**203335**

"I'm partially sighted. My GP at St Luke's is very good, they phone the chemist to order the medication and the chemist delivers to my home. I have medication in a kind of bubble wrap due to my eyes. They are very person centered at my surgery."

Two weeks ago, I fell and banged my leg and couldn't stop it bleeding. I called the doctors and the GP offered to come to my house to dress it. At the same time, he asked if I had my flu jab and I said no, so he brought it with him and vaccinated me there."

**203028**

## Pharmacy

We are increasingly hearing from people about their experiences of community pharmacy. People have told us that the convenience of having a pharmacy close by is very important:

"I use Tesco pharmacy usually, that's convenient for me where I live and I can do my shopping at the same time."

**203464**

It can also be disruptive when people don't have a pharmacy nearby and need to use it on a regular basis. People have also been sharing the impact of recent closures on them:

"I have the A-Z of health complaints... I find repeat prescriptions a pain, as you cannot do that over the phone. There is no pharmacy in Burpham at all, I used to use Sainsbury's but that closed and so I use the dispensary by the Doctors surgery now. One hour to walk down, one hour to pick up and one hour home. I can't afford the bus, so like I said I walk to the surgery. I enquired about delivery but I'm on a zero hours contract and so my hours are too unpredictable to be reliably in on a certain day – they won't put it through the door. I would be worried about it getting to me too, as my address is hard to find. [discussed NHS App] It would be useful to have the NHS App if my phone could cope, I can't download anything at the moment."

**203459**

"I used the Lloyds pharmacy in Sainsburys before it closed down, so I now use the dispensary at the GP. The queue is very big and I don't like waiting too long."

**203436**

"I've been using Epsom Road [Boots] since Sainsburys closed in August.

There is a huge queue outside Boots. They have taken on more people's prescriptions but not added any more staff. You used to be able to phone up but now no one answers the phone. Sometimes you have to make do with different medication."

**203027**

We continue to hear about shortages of HRT (hormone replacement therapy) and other medications. In extreme examples being unable to access medications can severely impact on people:

"Often have issues with meds in past [12 months ago], when at Boots. There, I had a couple of instances where the medication was not available for several days. I was experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms for both Valium and Methadone. I'm sorry to say, I had to use Heroin to get through. The physical pain in my stomach was so bad. When I take the Methadone now, it makes my stomach hurt for about 30 minutes and then I'm ok and don't want to use Heroin."

**201937**

## Vaccinations

We have been asking people about their experiences of booking flu and Covid vaccinations during our visit to Madrid Road Pharmacy as well as our conversations in other locations in the community.

People have told us that they have been surprised that their GP hasn't been able to provide a Covid vaccination:

"I used Madrid Road pharmacy for my COVID vaccination, I had to reach out to them. My GP didn't send me anything."

**203427**

"I was invited to book my flu/covid vaccinations. I tried calling 119, but my phone was a pain. I have a mobile phone but it keeps overheating. I'd called to book because I'd tried to book online, but then it said I needed a code and then the phone overheated and died. I didn't know how to get a code – so I called my GP practice once I got my phone on again [Dapdune] the practice said 'not us, we can't help' but they did suggest an alternative and that Direct Pharmacy does a walk in service."

**203459**

Whilst other people have booked through their GP. Different approaches can sometimes be confusing for people.

"I'm having my Covid jab at my surgery, they wrote to me."

**203027**

People who were more familiar with digital means told us they found it straight forward, however, this may indicate that people without digital access or knowledge are having to wait longer:

"I'm here today to get a vaccination it was really easy to book, we booked via the NHS App and we looked at getting the vaccination in Shere but it was a two week wait and so decided it was easier and quicker to come here [Direct Pharmacy]. Shere surgery don't usually offer vaccinations but this year they've been allowed to do that, it seems really popular to have it done in the village but it's taken a while to get it up and running and it seems like there are too many people waiting."

**203335**



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## About Healthwatch Surrey

Healthwatch Surrey champions the voice of local people, ensuring your experiences of health and social care are heard by service providers and decision makers. We know that services are best improved by listening to those who use them and by highlighting this independent feedback we are able to inform, improve, and, when necessary, challenge, decisions about current and future decisions about health and social care services.

We also provide information and signposting to help the people of Surrey find the care and support that best suits their needs.

## Community Engagement

In October 2023, our engagement team and local volunteers carried out a number of engagement events to speak to residents of Guildford and Waverley. People have also shared their experiences of health and social care services through our Helpdesk, Independent Health Complaints Advocacy service, 'Giving Carers a Voice' engagement, online Feedback Centre and postal submissions which have also been included in this report.

## Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who shared their experiences with us, our volunteers who assisted us during our engagement sessions, and to everyone who welcomed us during our community engagement events.

## Healthwatch Surrey – Contact us

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We are committed to the quality of our information.  
Every three years we perform an audit so that we can be certain of this.