



# Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames annual report 2025-2026

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# A message from our Chair



**It is a real privilege to introduce this year's Annual Report and to reflect on what has been a year of change, creativity, and renewed purpose for Healthwatch Kingston.**

One of the most significant developments has been our shift to New Dialogue. This has not simply been a structural change, but an opportunity to expand our priorities and think differently about how we listen, respond and lead. I have been particularly encouraged by how this transition has strengthened our ability to keep local people at the heart of everything we do.

We have also embraced new and creative ways of engaging with our community. Youth Out Loud! stands out as a powerful example using podcasts and video to open conversations and bring younger voices into spaces where they are too often missing. It has been inspiring to see these perspectives shaping our understanding.

At a time when the role of independent public voice is more important than ever, we remain committed to championing it. Our work continues to underline the importance of listening genuinely and consistently to the lived experiences of our communities.



**New Dialogue /  
Healthwatch Kingston,  
Chair  
Kathryn Yates**

Our regular Public Meetings have been a cornerstone of this approach, creating space for dialogue, challenge, and collaboration. Alongside this, our Enter and View programme continues to make a tangible difference, highlighting what good care looks like and where improvements are needed.

**I would like to thank everyone: staff, volunteers, and our community for their passion and commitment. It is through your voices that our work has meaning.**



# A message from our Chief Executive Officer



**This year has been one of both achievement and uncertainty for Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames. Government proposals to amend legislation to abolish local Healthwatch have been destabilising, and they risk the loss of the trust we have built with local communities over the past decade.**

Against this backdrop, we have proven – as we have done in previous years with stable commissioning arrangements in place – our team of staff and volunteers has over-achieved, consistently increasing our performance in numbers.

Local Healthwatch plays a vital role in championing the voice of patients and communities, particularly those most vulnerable. Proposals to place our functions into NHS and Local Authorities risk losing an independent voice and vital scrutiny in health and social care, as well as weakening accountability.

We continue to support people, amplify community feedback, and drive improvement, empowering thousands of Kingston residents to speak up and shape better, more responsive services.

We are working with local Healthwatch across England to protect independent public voice services, highlighting concerns about health and care systems ‘marking their own homework’ and engaging with local councillors and MPs to ensure local people retain a trusted, independent and way to influence services.

**We aren’t the only ones that feel this way. Experienced national leaders continue to share their views:**



“People won’t raise concerns if the only place to do so is within the system itself.”

**– The King’s Fund, March 2026**



“Local, independent and trusted patient organisations are not easily replaced. As the Government looks to reshape the health and care landscape, it must ensure that genuine patient partnership is enhanced, not lost, in the process. The voices of patients must remain at the heart of the journey towards a fairer, safer, and more responsive NHS.”

**– Chief Executive of the Patients Association, Rachel Power**



“Providers of health and social care need to know what patients and service users feel about the care they receive, including things that are sometimes uncomfortable to hear... it is vital that service users can always be confident there is also an independent body that can speak up on their behalf, without fear, or favour.”

**– Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**



# Championing the role of independent public voice services



Neither are we the only ones being negatively impacted by transformation plans and funding cuts.



New Dialogue /  
Healthwatch Kingston,  
Chief Executive Officer  
Stephen Bitti

South West London Integrated Care Board (ICB), faced with the Government's directive to further reduce costs and restructure, amid downsizing staffing levels, have also taken the decision to no longer provide the LeDeR (Learning from Lives and Deaths of people with a learning disability) programme and Healthwatch Kingston will support the **Kingston All Age Learning Disability Partnership Board** to challenge this decision.

Despite all the challenges ahead, I am once again immensely proud of what we have achieved together this year. Our commitment remains unwavering.

We will continue to stand alongside our communities, ensuring their voices are heard, valued, and acted upon while 'decision makers' debate our future.

**The arguments for the abolition of local Healthwatch include:** the patient feedback system is fragmented and there is duplication of roles and functions; too many recommendations, not enough impact; patient voice is not sufficiently embedded in decision-making; and a need to integrate functions into core NHS structures.

**Over the coming months, it will be important for us all to remember:**

- You don't fix local fragmentation by removing the one independent voice – you fix it by making the system listen better.
- If the system isn't acting on recommendations, the answer is better accountability – not less external evidence and not asking the system to mark its own homework.
- A voice inside the system is easier to ignore (NB. the [Ockenden Review Report](#), June 2026) – it is independence that makes it heard.
- We need to strengthen independent patient and service user voice – not neutralise it.



# New Dialogue is the new home of Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames

## A new chapter for our organisation

Since its creation, our organisation has been registered as the charitable company 'Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames', established to deliver the Healthwatch statutory service for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.

Following careful consideration of current proposals to transfer the functions of local Healthwatch to local authorities and Integrated Care Boards, the Healthwatch Kingston Board agreed to change the charitable company name to 'New Dialogue'.

This change relates solely to our organisation's name. The legal entity remains the same, and there is no change to governance, staff, or the delivery of the Healthwatch statutory service.

The existing Healthwatch Kingston team and Board of Trustees have been delivering the statutory Healthwatch service since 2016. In this time, the organisation has built a wealth of insights and trusted relationships across the borough that allows us to champion the voices of local people.

## Looking ahead

The Board aims to build on our proven approach to effective engagement and to broaden the organisation's remit from only health and social care to include all public services.

Over the coming months, New Dialogue will:

- Continue to deliver the Healthwatch Kingston statutory service
- Engage further with partners, stakeholders, and local communities to shape the organisation's expanded remit
- Explore an expanded programme of work focused on local independent scrutiny, informed by inclusive engagement and insight
- Develop our communications approach and the [New Dialogue website](#) to support our trusted relationships with local partners

# About us

## Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames is your local health and social care champion.

From **Chessington** to **Kingston Vale** and **everywhere in between**, we ensure that NHS and social care 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.



# Our year in numbers

In 2025–2026 we employed **6** staff (a mix of full and part time) and, our work was supported by **57** volunteers.



## Reaching out:

This report about our work during 2025–2026 is informed by **4,049** people (almost 3 times more than last year) who shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

**10,625** people (up by 84% from 2024–2025) came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as hospital accessibility, residential care, nursing homes and supported living, and community care services.



## Championing your voice:

We published **22 reports** (17 last year), [a podcast series](#) and [one short film](#) on topics including digital access, bereavement among people with autism and ADHD and the health and care needs of under-5s and their families.

Our most popular reports were from our programme of announced Enter and Views. These reports highlight our observations of the daily experiences of social care residents and make recommendations to improve their quality of life.



## Statutory funding:

We're funded by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. In 2025–2026 we received **£122,000**, which is the same as last year.

# Our digital reach

Signposting is a key part of our statutory Healthwatch duties. We use our digital platforms to reach people across Kingston, sharing information that can help keep them well and engaging with residents about their experiences using local services.

## A hub for information:

Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, **8,985** different people viewed different pages on our website **28,833** times (this year we changed our criteria to get a more accurate picture of who was accessing our website for information). People visited our website to learn about NHS services, read our reports and access information to help them make informed decisions about their care.

Our most popular pages this year included information about NHS dentistry, mental health services, and insights about ADHD support.

## Creating channels of conversation:

Using social media to connect directly with diverse communities across the borough, we started conversations about changes to the health and social care landscape, invited discussions about local peoples' experiences with services and shared vital information about health and wellbeing.

Our most popular content on Facebook was about patient safety, local initiatives to keep Kingston town centre safe and the future of drug and alcohol services.

## Keeping local people in the loop:

We sent out **22** e-newsletters (8 more than 2024-2025) that were opened **9,940** times (63% more than last year). Our e-newsletter allows us to champion the voices of residents, ensure they are kept informed of service changes, get the opportunity to have their say, and understand the changes that can happen when local people speak up.



### Understanding the upcoming changes to NHS structure

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced that NHS England will be abolished and the management of the NHS brought back to ministers. If you are concerned about what this means for NHS services, we have put together some information to help you understand the change. [Read more](#)



### Healthwatch Kingston chats to Mario for Neurodiversity Celebration Week

For Neurodiversity Celebration Week, we spoke with Mario, a Kingston resident who was diagnosed with autism at a young age, about his experiences and his role in helping local people with learning disabilities and autism have their voices heard. [Read more](#)



### Change NHS: What Adults with Support Needs Told Us

Change NHS is the biggest public conversation about the NHS in its 76-year history. To make sure local people's views, experiences and ideas are heard, we spoke to different groups in Kingston to find out what they think about the Government's three big shifts.

# 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 Kingston upon Thames. Here are a few highlights:

Spring (Apr – Jun)

We met with [local students](#) to learn more about the health topics young people want to hear about and how professionals and services can share information in a way that suits them.



Our successful programme of announced [Enter and View](#) visits was extended, allowing us to continue our work championing the quality of life of social care residents across the borough.



Summer (Jul – Sep)

We adopted a new communication plan with a renewed focus on ensuring Kingston residents have the information they need to make informed decisions about their health and social care.



Putting collaboration at the heart of our work, we invited residents and professional partners to a [Public Meeting](#) to feedback on our approach and offer their views on our future priorities.



Autumn (Oct – Dec)

We partnered with local Healthwatch across the country to understand [experiences with the NHS App](#) and ensure that plans to rely on digital systems are inclusive of everyone.



We coordinated with local partners to [promote services and support](#) over the cold weather period that could help keep vulnerable people well.



Winter (Jan – Mar)

We championed the voices of Kingston residents at a national level in [our response to a government consultation](#) on the new Online NHS Trust.



Informing the borough's approach to tackling health inequalities we illustrated the needs of local communities by compiling a [systematic data review](#) of our insights from the past 5 years.



# Working together for change

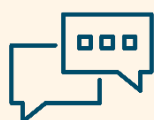
**We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in south west London are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at South West London ICS.**

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across south west London to collectively engage with **1416** people and achieve the following:



## **A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:**

We are part of the six-member South West London Healthwatch Collaborative. The Collaborative has collated residents' feedback from across south west London, including on community and adult mental health services. The Collaborative's Executive Officer has worked with the ICS to connect its activities with these insights, receiving positive feedback. On our Virtual Wards transformation work, our ICS said, "we have heard what's most important through local engagement, including by our Healthwatch partners."



## **A big conversation:**

The Collaborative engaged with the d/Deaf and deafblind community, their carers and GP Practice staff, to evaluate a new BSL (British Sign Language) interpretation provider used by Practices in south west London. We published two reports to highlight our recommendations, one for Practices and another for our ICS. We continue to meet with stakeholders to press for improvements to BSL interpretation services in south west London.



## **Building strong relationships to achieve more:**

Our Collaborative has met monthly with our ICS, to discuss engagement priorities and where their work aligns. The Executive Officer has also attended a variety of stakeholder groups to champion our activities and identify further engagement opportunities. All Local Healthwatch in south west London are preparing to adapt as Local Healthwatch and ICS structures evolve.

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

# Making a difference in the community

We bring local 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 Kingston upon Thames this year:

## Championing an approach driven by collaboration

We strive to make Healthwatch Kingston as collaborative and inclusive as it can be.

Our work has always centered approaches [designed and produced by the communities we serve](#). We hold quarterly Public Meetings that allow us to invite stakeholders to feedback about our engagement and insights, tell us what they value about the local Healthwatch model, and shape our priorities.

Inviting stakeholders, front-line professionals and decision makers to our Public Meetings creates an environment for community collaboration and allows us to identify areas of shared responsibility across the system.

## Getting services to involve the public

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

We worked with Kingston Council to invite local people with learning disabilities, their carers, and supporters to a 'Share Your Ideas' event.

The contributions of participants will help drive the strategic priorities of the Kingston [All Age Learning Disability Partnership Board](#), ensuring that future services are shaped by the voices of people with lived experience.

## Improving care over time

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

From our [2022 engagement with neurodiverse communities](#), we learnt that neurodiverse people in Kingston want to be accepted, understood and receive support that accommodates them. Since then, we have worked continuously with Kingston Council to develop the [All Age Autism and ADHD Strategy](#). As part of the strategy, Kingston Council adopted a [Neurodiversity Charter](#) in January 2026 to support local organisations to create more welcoming, accessible and supportive environments for neurodiverse people.



# 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, Healthwatch Kingston 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. Once anonymised, we share our local data with Healthwatch England to shape their national lobbying for change.



“The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people's thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

- Healthwatch England, Acting Chief Executive, Chris McCann



# Promoting dignity and independence in the social care system

**We use our statutory, independent Enter and View powers to visit services, observe care from the perspective of residents and share recommendations with those responsible for delivering and commissioning services.**

In April 2023, we began a programme of announced **Enter and View** visits to develop a wider understanding of care provision and the wellbeing of residents using these services in the borough.

Over the past three years, supported by close partnership with the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, the programme has evolved from a small-scale pilot, focused on a small number of settings, to cover residential care homes, nursing homes, and now supported living environments.

Embedded within the borough's quality assurance processes, our findings are reported through the Kingston Care Governance Board. This alignment ensures that independent, resident-centred insight contributes to system-wide accountability and improvement planning. Recommendations made are monitored and responded to, with local partners ensuring action plans are implemented to improve care quality across the borough.

**Since April 2023, our teams have completed 29 Enter and View visits across 20 providers, in 2025-2026 we:**

- Completed **14** Enter and View visits across **9** care providers.
- Spoke with **110** residents, relatives, and staff.
- Produced **14** detailed reports with **139** targeted recommendations.

## Focusing on what matters most

Our Kingston Enter and View programme is built around three observational themes to reflect the everyday experiences that shape residents' quality of life:

**Environment:** We assess whether services are clean, safe, welcoming, and supportive of dignity and independence.

**Mealtimes:** We observe food quality, choice, and whether mealtimes are respectful, social, and appropriately supported.

**Activities:** We explore opportunities for meaningful engagement, including how services support social interaction, wellbeing, and personal interests.

Our observations found that quality of experience is closely linked to visible and accessible leadership within care settings, sufficient staffing at key moments, such as mealtimes, and personalised, well-coordinated activities.



# Promoting dignity and independence in the social care system

## Productive partnerships

Our **Enter and View** approach, rooted in the everyday experiences of residents, complements formal inspection frameworks. A key development has been the establishment of quarterly bilateral meetings between Healthwatch Kingston and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). These meetings bring together independent insight from our visits, feedback from residents, families, and communities and broader intelligence from our local engagement work.

This structured collaboration has strengthened the flow of insight between local and national organisations responsible for quality assurance and regulation and supported local partners to identify emerging issues earlier, co-ordinate regulatory visits to reduce duplication and build a holistic understanding of service quality.



“It has been very useful to meet with Healthwatch Kingston. I particularly like the reports they produce and the fact they are well presented with photos and an easy-to-read layout. They provide useful information for local people and people using services. Our meetings are an important way to share information.”

- CQC, Operations Manager, Duncan Paterson,

## What impact did Healthwatch Kingston achieve?

The programme has supported clear-system level benefits, with a quality framework that is rooted in what matters most to residents.

Providers have responded positively to recommendations, often implementing changes quickly and constructively, while Kingston Council's Quality Assurance team uses our independent insight to refine and strengthen their own assessments.

## Building on best practice

The programme has been extended for a further year (2026-2027) and we are working with Kingston Council to develop a new **Enter and View** hybrid model to review **Day Centres** across Kingston. This model will allow us to apply our approach more flexibly, ensuring that insight continues to reflect the different ways people access support across the borough.

This next phase reflects the strength and credibility of the programme, and the growing recognition that local, independent community-led insight is essential to understanding and improving care. As the programme continues to develop, at its heart remains a simple but powerful principle: when people's experiences are heard, understood, and acted upon, care improves.



# Creative, peer-led involvement for young people

Throughout 2025–2026, we continued to empower young people aged 13–17 to engage with their health and care through [Youth Out Loud!](#)

Engaging young people on the health and care issues that matter to them, we build their confidence in navigating the system and demonstrate the power they have when speaking up about their needs.

## What did we do?

We regularly speak to young people to understand which [health topics](#) matter to them and how they would prefer for services to engage with them. These insights allow us to work with professionals to identify gaps in their approaches and better connect with young people.

What we hear shapes our own information and signposting work. **Youth Out Loud!** members are supported by professionals to identify the topics they want to highlight on the **Youth Out Loud!** website and social media channels and feedback on content as it develops.

This year, Youth Out Loud! members created a short film, [Healthy Menstruation and Endometriosis](#), raising awareness of menstrual health and endometriosis through a blend of professional insights and peer-testimony. Putting creativity at the heart of our engagement approach creates an environment where the group feels comfortable expressing themselves on their own terms.



“Making this Menstrual Health and Endometriosis film meant a lot to me as I feel it is a topic that doesn’t get spoken about enough, even though Endo affects 1 in 10 women. I loved being part of the film and raising awareness that this condition affects young people too.”

– **Youth Out Loud! member**



# Understanding the social needs of Disabled residents

Everyone should have the opportunity to be part of their local community, feel included and treated equitably. When we spoke to socially isolated, physically Disabled residents, we heard about the barriers that keep them from being able to fully enjoy life in Kingston.

Last year, we ran four, inclusive community engagement groups in partnership with the Kingston Centre for Independent Living to understand [the health and care needs of socially isolated, physically Disabled residents](#).

We heard how inaccessible public transport, stigma and poor communication about inclusive social activities and services are some of the factors that limit local Disabled adults' ability to be part of the local community.

## What impact did Healthwatch Kingston achieve?

What we heard has shaped our work and our own organisation throughout 2025–2026. Our report, published in June 2025, made key recommendations around service delivery and coordination, accessibility and infrastructure, information and communication, and inclusion and representation that we have raised with Kingston Council, NHS leads and local voluntary and community sector organisations.

Following our engagement, a participant joined New Dialogue (the home of Healthwatch Kingston) as our Board Lead for People with Physical Disabilities, offering a dedicated perspective on the needs of Disabled adults in the borough across our work.

In joining the Kingston Disability Network, we have contributed to building a dedicated platform for local adults with physical disabilities to have their say and worked with Transport for London to raise concerns around accessibility.



# Creating spaces where neurodiverse people feel heard

Over the past several years we have been working with underrepresented groups in south west London to explore the intersection of grief, culture, faith and language. We have worked with NHS and voluntary and community sector organisations to understand [the gaps in support](#), the barriers people face and [what matters most when grieving](#).

## What did we do?

This year, we expanded on our insights by speaking with adults with autism and ADHD about their experiences of grief and bereavement to [create a podcast series](#).

We discussed how it could be distressing when healthcare professionals and services were not prepared to support someone through a bereavement, and how more information about processing difficult emotions, and the feelings involved in grief could be beneficial.

We also heard that it was important to know that support from a professional would be inclusive of neurodiversity and the different ways people experience grief and loss.

We worked with Kingston Bereavement Support to ensure participants were supported throughout the process and we later heard how the project had given those involved a safe and supportive environment to talk openly about their feelings.

By independently championing the voices of local people, we tackle the sense of stigma that comes with difficult feelings and experiences, and we create spaces where communities feel empowered to speak up. Utilising creative products like podcasts and videos allows us to create accessible ways for people to engage with the topics we explore and centre the testimony of local people.

We will be joining Princess Alice Hospice to talk about the experiences we heard on their Belonging and Beyond podcast, a space for honest conversations about inclusion and belonging where we can talk about the barriers experienced by neurodiverse people in Kingston.

“It was just really, really, really lovely to see everyone share their stories... [it had] a really positive effect on the people that I work with.”

– Local community group leader



# Hearing from all communities

We are here for all residents of Kingston upon Thames. That is why, over the past year, we have 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 amplified the voices of different communities by:**

- Collaborating with local Healthwatch across England to ensure patient preference and need is safeguarded in the turn to digital models.
- Sharing our insights from our work with local communities at a national level to shape the future of the Online NHS Trust.
- Analysing our engagement data to illustrate the breadth of areas where health inequalities arise when minoritised patients, carers and families engage with the system.



# Making sure digital first approaches don't leave anyone behind

**We worked in partnership with local Healthwatch to scrutinise government plans to rely on digital systems and ensure communication services are accessible for all.**

Collaborating with local Healthwatch across the country, we examined people's experiences of using the NHS App, considering options for decision makers to protect patient choice and the accessibility of services.



"I would worry feedback may prejudice my care"  
– survey respondent

The findings, presented in the [Local Healthwatch NHS App and Independent Feedback Report](#), represent the views and experiences

of **1,709** people across **19** local Healthwatch areas and illustrate both the opportunities and risks associated with the NHS's rapid shift toward digital first models especially alongside proposals to transition independent feedback functions into NHS structures.

## What impact did Healthwatch Kingston achieve?

The findings and recommendations from this report have been shared with healthcare providers and NHS commissioners to ensure that people continue to have a range of options to meet their needs during the ongoing digital transformation.

## Putting the voices of Kingston on the national agenda

**We responded to a government consultation on the Online NHS Trust to share our insights about the preferences, needs and concerns of local community groups.**

In the [Developing NHS Online: Local Healthwatch Consultation Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames Response](#) we highlighted that the take-up and suitability of digital health service varies greatly, and there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Our engagement has shown that efforts to promote digital services and foster skills work best when they are driven by empathetic, human-led approaches, based in the community.

## What impact did Healthwatch Kingston achieve?

Responding to the consultation with findings from our engagement, we made sure the views and experiences of local people are represented at a national level.

# Identifying long term trends in health and social care inequalities

**We analysed five years of our community engagement data to shape the borough's approach to tackling health inequalities.**

Our [New Dialogue Data Review: Health and Social Care Inequalities](#) brings together the insights and feedback shared with us across a five-year period. By undertaking a comprehensive review of our historic engagement data, we identified long-term trends across services. The findings will help shape a holistic system-level approach to tackling health inequalities.

Driven by the understanding that health inequalities are underpinned by the interconnected, wider determinants of health – the individual, social and economic factors – the review highlights universal issues that disproportionately affect minoritised communities, particularly those with low English proficiency or limited digital skills.

Across settings, including residential care, hospital wards, early years services, mental health support, bereavement support, community services and digital access, people have described challenges in navigating systems, securing appropriate information, understanding their entitlements, receiving culturally responsive care and experiencing joined-up communication.

## What impact did Healthwatch Kingston achieve?

Our five-year review of our community engagement data has supported the development of the Kingston Director of Public Health annual report.



# Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

**This year 10,625 (up by 84% from 2024-2025) people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding NHS and social care services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.**

**As the statutory health and social care signposting service, we have helped Kingston residents by:**

- Providing accessible, up-to-date information people can trust.
- Connecting people with the service in the borough that exist to support them.
- Sharing information and advice to empower people to look after their health and make informed decisions about their social care.
- Signposting people to additional support and helping them navigate the health and social care system.



## Strengthening information sharing across services

**We worked closely with organisations across Kingston; these partnerships allow us to connect people to the services that they need and find out about the support that is available.**

As temperatures drop each year we co-ordinated with partners to ensure local people had the information they needed to manage their health and wellbeing. We used our website to consolidate information about [mental health services](#), [keeping well in winter](#) and [cost of living support](#), and brought people together in community spaces to connect vulnerable residents with trusted professionals.

Our December Public Meeting was hosted in partnership with the [All Age Learning Disability Partnership Board](#) and the [Kingston Mental Health and Wellbeing Group](#). Local people were empowered to speak directly to service providers about the support they offer and advocate for their needs.

Through [Kingston Safeguarding Voices](#) we work with people who have had experiences with the safeguarding process, advocates and professionals to make safeguarding more transparent, accessible and person-centred.

This year, members of Kingston Safeguarding Voices told us that they would like more information about what to do if they are in town and they don't feel safe. We reached out to the Royal Borough of Kingston Community Safety Team who told us about the local initiatives working to keep the town centre safe.

We took what we heard from the Community Safety Team and shared it not only with the Kingston Safeguarding Voices but with the wider community through our website and digital channels.

There are lots of people who work to support residents in Kingston, but finding out about local initiatives and organisations can be difficult. By opening up conversations with different communities in the borough, we can use our local partnerships to consolidate information and strengthen residents' confidence in navigating services based on their needs.



# Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **1488** hours 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:

- Represented our insights and the experiences of local people on steering groups and committees.
- Acted as Authorised Representatives, carrying out **Enter and View** visits to local care providers and shaped recommendations to help them improve.
- Created creative outputs on the health and care topics that matter to them.
- Joined us at stakeholder meetings to address our agreed priorities (thanks Robbie for your support at our strategic review of young people's engagement at the Old Malden Family Hub!)



# 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.



**Karen Dempster,  
Board Lead for People  
with Physical  
Disabilities**

“Meeting the Healthwatch Kingston team in 2025 at a workshop on Social Isolation of Physically Disabled Adults was a turning point in my life. Through their encouragement and support, I became a Board member and was introduced to the Kingston Disability Network (KDN).

I now contribute to publications and share my lived experience to help shape local services. Through the KDN, I have worked with other disabled residents to raise awareness of accessibility issues, including Lime bikes obstructing pavements.

Healthwatch Kingston has helped me overcome social isolation, build confidence, connect with my community and contribute to positive change across the borough”

“Working with Youth Out Loud! at Healthwatch Kingston is something that has empowered me as a young adult.

They encouraged a supportive environment that helped me feel heard and valued. Being a part of this group has allowed me to connect with others who share similar experiences to me. Which in turn has made speaking up about health and care less intimidating.

I think that it’s helped me with my own personal growth to feel more in control and in tune with my own wellbeing”



**Eva, Youth Out Loud!  
member**

## Be part of the change.

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[www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk)



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# Our extended family album



# Finance and future priorities

We receive an annual core grant from Government (via the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames) under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work. Our delivery is further supported by additional projects income.

## Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual core grant from Government	£122,000	Expenditure on pay	£158,012
Additional income	£57,500	Non-pay expenditure	£5,379
		Office and management fee	£33,866
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£179,500</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£197,257</b>

## Additional income is broken down into:

- £17,000 received from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (RBK) to deliver the 2025-26 Enter and View of care homes programme.
- £7,000 funding received from RBK to support increased engagement of people living with a learning disability in our statutory service work.
- £7,000 funding received from RBK to deliver Kingston Making Safeguarding Personal, and the Kingston Safeguarding Voices Group.
- £12,500 received from Camden Council (on behalf of London ADASS) to coordinate the London Safeguarding Adults group (6-months until 30.09.25).
- £2,000 received from the ICCM Metals Recycling of Metals scheme via Kingston Voluntary Action for a podcast that supported Adults with autism and ADHD share their experience of bereavement.
- £5,000 received from the ICCM Metals Recycling of Metals scheme via Kingston Voluntary Action for a film about bereavement by and for young people with learning disabilities.
- £350.67 received via charitable donations.

*Expenditure total was also funded with some Board agreed business development reserves.*

# Finance and future priorities

## Our income and expenditure (continued):

### Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across south west London also receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level and projects:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Participation in the SWL Healthwatch Collaborative.	£4,000
Grant funding (via Kingston Voluntary Action) to create a Women's Health film (by and for young people) to raise awareness of Endometriosis.	£2,000

**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.

**You can check out our Healthwatch Kingston planned seven key work areas for 2026-2027 on the next page, but our top three priorities are:**

1. Continue to provide local independent voice and impartial scrutiny of NHS and social care services in Kingston and ensure any required local Healthwatch functions transition smoothly during proposed legislative changes.
2. Continue to monitor inequalities, in particular, the health and care needs of people living with short, intermittent and long-term conditions.
3. Further strengthen relationships with other VCSE organisations to explore co-production and other community engagement opportunities.

# Finance and future priorities

## Our plans for 2026–2027:

### 1. NHS and social care transformation

Continue to monitor the commissioning, provision and transformation of NHS and social care in Kingston and the regional Integrated Care System (ICS) due to legislative change.

### 2. Promoting positive health and reducing health and care inequalities

- a) Continue to monitor inequalities, in particular, the health and care needs of people living with short, intermittent and long-term conditions.
- b) Engage with local people at higher risk of poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes to inform the development of the Kingston Sexual & Reproductive Health and HIV Strategy.
- c) Review the experiences of unpaid carers' involvement in patient care plans before discharge from hospital back into the community.

### 3. Learning disability, autism, and neurodiversity

- a) Continue to support meaningful engagement with local people with a learning disability in the work of Healthwatch Kingston, including Enter and View training.
- b) Provide independent chair and administrative support for the 'Kingston All Age Learning Disability Partnership Board' (until end of September 2026)
- c) Develop and pilot a hybrid 'Enter and View' model to provide independent reviews of day centres in Kingston.
- d) Continue membership of the 'Kingston Autism and ADHD Partnership Board'.

### 4. Mental health and wellbeing

- a) Continue to provide independent chair and support for the 'Kingston Mental Health and Wellbeing Group' and attend the Kingston & Richmond Place Mental Health Committee.
- b) Continue to collaborate with Kingston Voluntary Action to support community engagement about End-of-Life Care and bereavement services.

### 5. Young People (13–17 years)

- a) Continue to support Youth Out Loud! (YOL!) to review health and care services.
- b) Continue to support delivery of the Digital Youth Project to add to the library of health and care films and podcasts by young people for young people.

### 6. Residential care, nursing home and supportive living

- a) Continue membership of the 'Kingston Care Governance Board'.
- b) Enter and View a series of Kingston based care, nursing and supported living homes, focusing on mealtime experiences, meaningful activities for residents and living environments.

### 7. Safeguarding and prevention of harm

- a) Continue membership of the Kingston Safeguarding Adults Board.
- b) Continue to support Kingston Safeguarding Voices.

# Statutory Statements

**Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames**, Suite 3, 2nd Floor, Siddeley House, 50, Canbury Park Road, Kingston upon Thames KT2 6LX.

**New Dialogue** holds the Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames contract. New Dialogue is a company registered in England and Wales with a company no. 08429159 and a registered charity no. 1159377.

**Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.**

## The way we work

### **Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.**

Our Healthwatch Board consists of seven members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2025–2026, the Board met four times and made decisions on matters such as reviewing and approving the budget to make optimum and imaginative use of our limited resources. This also includes plays an active role governing the management of risk and mitigation. Nominated trustees review and sign-off reports and recommendations on behalf of the Board. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

## **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 into their experience of using services.

During 2025–2026, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, promote it via social media, and send it to our many stakeholders.

# Statutory Statements

## 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 insights and experiences shared with us, including the voices of local people, many of whom are most vulnerable or digitally excluded.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Kingston Place Based Committee and the Kingston Health Overview (scrutiny) Panel.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the South West London Integrated Care System. For example, we present findings from our south west London-wide engagement to forums including the Health Equity Partnership Group, the SWL Health Research Collaborative and South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames is represented on the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Health and Wellbeing Board by Stephen Bitti, Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames.

During 2025- 2026, our representative has effectively carried out this role by taking information to Kingston Partnership Board (which incorporates the Kingston Health and Wellbeing Board) and contributing to the Health and Wellbeing Board agenda items.

Alyssa Chase-Vilchez and latterly Andrew McDonald has represented the six Local Healthwatch in south west London to South West London Integrated Care Partnership Board and their sub-committees.

# Statutory Statements

## Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What we did as a result
Galsworthy House (work completed in January 2026 – report published June 2026)	We undertook one visit as part of our programme of announced Enter and View visits in partnership with Kingston council.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations around meaningful activities, mealtime experience and living environment.
Acorn Lodge (work completed in January 2026 – report published June 2026)	We undertook one visit as above.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations as above.
Royal Star and Garter (work completed in November 2025 – report published June 2026)	We undertook two visits as above.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations as above.
Surbitonian Gardens Care Home (work completed in February 2026 – report published June 2026)	We undertook three visits as above.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations as above.
Bourne House (work completed in September 2025 – report published April 2026)	Undertook two visits as above.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations as above.
HF Trust Thetford Road	Undertook one visit as above.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations as above.
Ashton Meadows	Undertook two visits as above.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations as above.
Medihands Healthcare	Undertook one visit as above.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations as above.
Elysium Partnership Ewell Road	Undertook one visit as above.	Wrote a <a href="#">report</a> with recommendations as above.

To read our Enter and View reports from previous years, visit the '[Residential care, nursing homes, and supported living](#)' page on our website.

# Statutory Statements

## 2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
All Age Learning Disability Partnership Board (AALDPB)	<a href="#">AALDPB</a> is co-chaired between Healthwatch Kingston and adults with learning disabilities who are supported to fully participate. The board has agreed to establish working groups to cover three areas: Education and employment, inclusive communities and accommodation.
Kingston Mental Health and Wellbeing Group	Healthwatch Kingston chairs and facilitates the <a href="#">Kingston Mental Health and Wellbeing Group</a> , bringing together professional stakeholders from various sectors to address mental health service needs in Kingston upon Thames. This is an open group that actively encourages people with lived experiences of mental health to participate.
Kingston Safeguarding Voices (KSV)	<a href="#">Kingston Safeguarding Voices</a> members are empowered to take ownership of the safeguarding journey and shape the future of safeguarding services. This year, KSV gave feedback to RBK on the citizens safeguarding referral page, have begun creating a visual timeline for the safeguarding journey and have contributed to the development of an Easy Read 'What is Kingston Safeguarding Adults Board'. KSV also supports the involvement of neurodiverse members with meetings attended by Peer Advocates from Involve and Fastminds who offer feedback.
Kingston Care Governance Board (KCGB)	Our insights gathered from continuing to deliver the Kingston Enter and View Pilot Programme 2025-26, inform the work of the KCGB. RBK quality assurance team have emphasised how valuable and informative the reports continue to be.
Strategic review of young people's engagement	Healthwatch Kingston met with local professional stakeholders involved in young people's engagement across Kingston and Richmond to develop a strategic local partnership approach and explore opportunities for collaboration
Early Years: Health and care needs of under-5s and their families	Healthwatch Kingston met with professional stakeholders responsible for services for under-5s and their families to review findings from our 2025 <a href="#">The health and care needs of under-5s and their families</a> report. We highlighted that families struggled to find information about the support available and are working with the Royal Borough of Kingston to create a dedicated page on <a href="#">Connected Kingston</a> .

# Statutory Statements

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Kingston Disability Network	Healthwatch Kingston is represented by a volunteer and Board member on the Kingston Disability Network which is currently working with Transport for London to ensure that accessible facilities remain open.
Youth Out Loud!	Youth Out Loud! members offered feedback to local provider Your Healthcare about the health drop-in sessions they provide at schools and colleges. Members highlighted concerns around anonymity, sharing that some might be put off attending out in case they were seen entering/leaving by friends and classmates. Youth Out Loud! members also created a page on smoking and vaping, after meeting with smoking cessation service Ctrl-Z. The resource that YOL! members created was shared among local schools and featured in Canbury School's newsletter. YOL! created a grief and bereavement support page promoting advice from a local GP.
Kingston Autism and ADHD Partnership Board	We've raised our insights about the referral process for young people transitioning to adult services and for those who are 16-18 still waiting for assessments, particularly as services are being transferred from Achieving for Children to South West London St Georges Hospital
Authorised representative training	We've made a deliberate effort to recruit Authorised Representatives (AR) from a range of backgrounds to ensure diverse experiences and insights are helping shape our recommendations. We offer inclusive AR training sessions, and we have begun exploring how AR with a learning disability might participate in Enter and Views of Day Centres in Kingston.

## Collaborative outcomes with six-member south west London local Healthwatch

Adult Community Mental Health Transformation Project (SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer)	We presented our insights from adult community mental health service users to South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust. We continue to meet with the Trust biannually to share findings from our other projects.
South West London Community Services Project (SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer)	We have collated findings about NHS and Local Authority community services from all six Local Healthwatch in South West London. We published a final report, <a href="#">Patient and unpaid carer engagement across south west London community services</a> , to inform delivery of these services.
Dentistry Advocacy (SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer)	Following earlier engagement, we met with our ICS to discuss improvements to dentistry provision in south west London. This is an ongoing piece of work which we hope to remain involved in next year.

**New Dialogue is the home of Healthwatch  
Kingston upon Thames**

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