

# Newsletter - February 2024

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## Welcome to our February newsletter

This month our newsletter includes:

- [Directors Update](#)
  - [Latest news and updates](#)
  - [Healthwatch - What we have heard about health and care services in East Sussex](#)
  - [Our volunteer activity](#)
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## Directors Update

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As we head into the new financial new year, we have lots of planning underway here at Healthwatch East Sussex to finalise our work plans and projects for the coming year.

Your feedback is vital in helping to shape the focus our work so please do continue to share it with us.

Remember, you can always share your experiences with us at any time via our [Feedback Centre](#) or by contacting our [Information and Signposting Service](#).

We've finalised our 2023 Rye Listening Tour report which will be published on our [Reports Hubs](#) shortly, so please do keep an eye on the website.

Also look out for us at the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board on the 5<sup>th</sup> March where we will be presenting the Listening Tour report and our key findings and recommendations.

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**Veronica Kirwan**

Executive Director

East Sussex Community Voice, delivering Healthwatch in East Sussex

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## Latest news and updates

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### January 2024 Poll Results: Your experiences of 'Patient Knows Best'

In our January 2024 newsletter we asked about experiences of using the 'Patients Knows Best' platform to access [My Health and Care Record](#).

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We heard:

- Just over half (54.17%) of respondents had used 'Patient Knows Best' for more than 12 months.
  - Test results were the feature most identified as very useful/useful (80.8%), followed by Sharing clinical documents (61.5%).
  - The least used parts of platform were messaging with health professionals, resources (advice and information), and appointment management.
  - Nearly half of people (42.3%) felt the platform made their experiences of managing their health and care easier/better, but 15.4% felt it made it worse.
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## January Poll Results

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### Work starts on a new mental health hospital in Bexhill

On Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January work started on the site of a new mental health hospital in Bexhill. The 54-bed hospital on Mount View Street, Bexhill, was also officially named Combe Valley – chosen by staff and service users.

Combe Valley Hospital has been developed by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT) alongside NHS Sussex, the Integrated Care Board for Sussex, supported by input from local service users and staff.

Opening its doors during 2025, the new hospital will provide care for people who may be experiencing serious mental health problems, emotional crisis, or severe distress which cannot be treated in the community.

The facilities will replace outdated dormitory accommodation at the Department of Psychiatry – currently based at Eastbourne District General Hospital.

[Read more here](#)

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## What is measles and who can get the vaccine?

Measles vaccination rates are at a ten-year low, but cases are rising nationwide.

Measles is a highly contagious infection caused by the measles virus.

Most children recover from measles without complications, but in some, it can be more severe and lead to admission to hospital.

More information about the symptoms of measles, can be found on the [NHS website](#).

The NHS advises that children receive two doses of the measles vaccine (also known as the MMR vaccine) to protect them against Measles, Mumps and Rubella.

The vaccine is given in two doses: the first dose when the child is one year old and the second when they are three years and four months old. Both doses are needed for the best protection.

If you need to get your child's MMR vaccine or check if your child is fully protected, contact your local GP practice.

[Read more here](#)

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## East Sussex Community Voice launches new website

Our host organisation East Sussex Community Voice have launched their new website.

The new website is now easier to navigate and details the range of projects and programmes they deliver, including Healthwatch East Sussex.

Visit the new site to find out more about the team and how they can help with your project.

[Visit the new website here](#)

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## Join the millions using the NHS App

The NHS App is a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services and information on your smartphone or tablet.

Millions of people are already using the NHS App to manage their health.

Whether viewing your GP health record, ordering repeat prescriptions, or nominating your preferred pharmacy – the NHS App hosts a range of features that can help you to access NHS services and information.

For more information, including how to download the NHS App, please visit the link below.

[NHS App](#)

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## Pharmacies begin treating people for common conditions

From the 31st January 2024, people can visit their local pharmacy for help with seven minor conditions, which would previously have required a GP appointment. This scheme is known as Pharmacy First.

Pharmacists will be able to assess and treat patients for seven conditions without the need for an appointment or prescription:

- Sinusitis (for patients aged 12 years and over only)
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- Sore throat (aged 5+)
- Earache (aged 1 year-17)
- Infected insect bite (aged 1 year+)
- Impetigo (aged 18 years+)
- Shingles (aged 18 years+)
- Uncomplicated urinary tract infections (women aged 16 to 64)

If you have symptoms that suggest you may have one of these conditions, you can now walk into a pharmacy and be offered a consultation with the pharmacist.

More than 7 in 10 community pharmacies in the South East (over 1,000 in total) will be offering the initiative, with the health service making it easier and more convenient for people to access care.

[Read more](#)

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## Contact East Sussex County Council using British Sign Language (BSL)

Residents are now able to contact the council instantly through a video interpreter to access help and support using SignLive BSL.

SignLive lets you have a three-way video call with the council and a qualified BSL interpreter.

It is free to call East Sussex County Council using SignLive, you just need wifi or mobile data to make the video call.

SignLive can be accessed via: a desktop computer or laptop with a webcam, microphone and speakers, or via an app on your smartphone or tablet.

The first time you use SignLive you will need to complete a quick registration. This will keep your account secure and allow the team to call you back if needed.

BSL users are also able to use the service for in-person interpretation at reception points at County Hall in Lewes, St Mary's House in Eastbourne and Cavendish House in

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Hastings.

For more information including how to use SignLive and register your account please use the link below.

[More information here](#)

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## Are you a young person living in Sussex? Become a Youth Consultant with NHS Sussex.

If you are aged 16-24 years, you could be a volunteer Youth Consultant and help shape future NHS health and social care services in Sussex.

- Contribute to plans for NHS Services
- Design or review comms and social media
- Get support and training
- Design surveys or run workshops

### How to get involved:

Please read through the Youth Consultant role profile via the link below and complete and return the Application and Equal Opportunities monitoring form by **Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024**.

If you have any questions you would like to ask before applying, need this in a different format or would like any help, please contact Heather Brightwell:

[heather.brightwell@nhs.net](mailto:heather.brightwell@nhs.net) or 07388 968 545.

[Become a youth consultant with NHS Sussex](#)

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## Tell us your experiences of NHS health and care in Sussex

We are supporting NHS Sussex in promoting a new survey to find out about your experiences and views of local health and care services.

Health leaders wish to understand your experiences and views of health and care services across Sussex.

Share your views through this survey on your experiences of current services, what is working well and where improvements could be made.

There is also a spotlight in this survey on the sharing and use of information about your health and wellbeing within the NHS to help inform its work.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and each response will be reviewed and analysed.

What you share will support improvements in the delivery of key services including Urgent Care, Primary Care services (e.g. GP surgeries and dentists) and the use of personal data and information within and between health and care services.

[Take the survey here](#)

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## Healthwatch shares information on independent living support and staying safe at home

If you struggle with everyday tasks, due to a disability or a health condition you may be able to get support in the form of home adaptations or equipment to [help you to use or move around your home](#).

Our Information and Signposting service have pulled together information on how you can get support with home adaptations or equipment and further information on what is available.

[Read the article here](#)

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## Hourglass Conference 2024

Hourglass, a charity focused on ending the abuse of older people will be holding their 2024 conference at the Amex Stadium in Brighton on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

This year's conference, focusing on how the UK heads Towards a Safer Ageing Society, will feature top level launches, policy announcements and expert speakers from the four

nations of the UK.

Hourglass will be joined leaders from Women's Aid, Independent Age, Age UK, Mankind and more. Headlining the event will be the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex who will give a talk on Hourglass' Community Response and IDVA programme, which provides direct support for older victim-survivors in Sussex.

The event will consist of keynote speeches, panels and talks on the importance of specialised support for older people and more.

Find out more and book your place via the link below.

[Hourglass Conference 2024](#)

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## Children's very specialist cancer service consultation feedback report published

At the end 2023 we shared a consultation being held by NHS England (London and South East regions) about the future location of very specialist cancer treatment services for children living in Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, Kent, Medway, south London, and most of Surrey.

The consultation ran for 12-weeks from Tuesday 26th September to Monday 18th December 2023.

The findings from this consultation has been independently analysed and written up into a report, which can be found on the consultation's [dedicated webpage](#).

### Next steps

The decision on the future location of the children's cancer centre will be taken by NHS England leaders for London and South East regions. They will consider the feedback and additional evidence that came forward during the consultation, alongside all other relevant information.

The decision is currently expected to be taken in spring 2024.

The decision-making meeting will be held in public. Details of the meeting will be shared via the consultation website once available.

**There will be no sudden changes to how children and young people receive care. The proposed future Principal Treatment Centre would not be ready until late 2026 at the earliest.**

Future updates will be published on the consultation web page below.

[Read more here](#)

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## Healthwatch - What we have heard about health and care services in East Sussex

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The January 2024 edition of our ['You Said, We Did' resource](#) is now live on our website, highlighting how we have responded to enquiries received by our [Information and Signposting Service](#), as well as some of the wider actions we have taken in response to cross-cutting health and care issues.

### Our activity in January included:

- We responded to a request from the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) to share public/patient feedback on the proposed changes to the paediatric pathway for urgent care at Eastbourne District General Hospital. We shared what we had heard, our observations and questions to ensure the benefits for patients are clear and feedback is regularly captured so the impacts of changes can be monitored moving forwards.
- We discussed current trends and themes around NHS complaints and advocacy with our colleagues at The Advocacy People. We highlighted concerns around the limited guidance and support for children and young people to leave feedback or make complaints to health and care services. We shared our thoughts with NHS Sussex to ask whether more can be done to support them with these processes.

- We contributed to the Watchdog Group of the Sussex Integrated Dataset (SID) to support NHS Sussex in ensuring that patient data is used appropriately, has robust safeguards to protect it, and access is restricted to approved individuals exploring relevant health and care themes. We heard how the SID is supporting GPs and other services to better understand the health needs of people across Sussex.
- We liaised with Healthwatch England to explore how we can share our feedback and insight to support their forthcoming national programme on Social Care. Our 'Putting a Face to Unmet Need' project is being shared with local Healthwatch to highlight how collaboration can support greater insight gathering on this theme.

Read the full January document via our website via the link below.

**'You Said, We Did' – January 2024**

### **Tell Us Your Experiences**

Please tell us your experiences of local health and care services via our [Feedback Centre](#) and let us know how this has been for you.

We want to hear if it has been good, bad or indifferent.

### **Help and support with Health and Care**

If you need help or support related to health or care, then please contact our [Information & Signposting Service](#) via

**Tel:** 0333 101 4007

**Email:** [enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk)