

How can we help? Poverty



We are proud to have signed up to the End Poverty Pledge - [End Poverty Surrey – Good Company](#). Using Good Company's self assessment guide we reflected on what our organisation is doing, and what more we can do, to prevent or alleviate poverty in our communities.

As a result we agreed 2 positive actions to undertake as a team:

- 1) Hold a team lunch and learn specifically on information and signposting around all the support and advice available to those who are struggling financially, to ensure that our whole team is well equipped when out on engagement and can signpost people appropriately
- 2) Ensure when we are at the start of projects that we include poverty in our project initiation discussions, to consider whether poverty is a key issue for the project and if so whether we need to adapt our research methods accordingly.

Why is signing the End Poverty Pledge important to us?

Our Luminus vision is 'a society where everyone's voice is heard, so we all receive the support we need for our wellbeing'.

We often hear from people about the impact that finances, or lack of, has on their lives and in turn, the impact this has on their wellbeing (we specifically looked at this as part of our [mental health engagement](#), where we found that only half of the people we spoke to knew where to turn to for financial support) .

We support the End Poverty pledge through our everyday work in a variety of ways;

- Ensuring people we speak to are aware of services and benefits available that might help them financially
- Providing information and advice on our website
- Ensuring service providers and decision makers are aware of the impact that financial barriers have when it comes to accessing services.

Giving Carers a Voice

Unpaid carers often face significant financial hardship as they dedicate their time and energy to supporting those they care for, often reducing working hours or leaving employment altogether (this is highlighted in the latest [Carers UK, State of Caring report](#) which states that 35% of working carers say they have reduced their working hours and a fifth (21%) say they have taken on a lower paid or more junior role). At the same time, the extra costs of caring – such as travel, medical equipment or higher household bills, can place further strain on already stretched budgets.

Local organisations are reporting clear financial pressure among Surrey carers: Action for Carers (Surrey) documents extra costs, reduced employment and financial distress in its 2023–24 Impact Report and annual statements; its benefits adviser helped carers access an estimated **£1.3m** in entitled benefits by March 2024.

Luminus Giving Carers a Voice team often hear about the financial impact of caring and the effect this also has on people's mental health. Where appropriate they will provide signposting to these carers (often to Action for Carers Surrey, Mobilise and Citizen's Advice).

One example of a parent carer's experience:

"I have had to give up my job to care for her and this has had a tremendous financial impact on us as a family. My husband now has to support us all and we can't afford any 'extras' and my older daughter can get quite resentful that she can't have things that her friends have or go out and do things that they can. We just can't afford it. I did try working from home after I gave up my job in the school but it wasn't possible if my daughter was home. You can't work while she is having a meltdown in the background. I'm currently waiting for a decision on DLA and carers allowance. It could take months and we could do with the money now. All this has affected my mental health too."

Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk

Our Helpdesk hears from lots of people who are finding it hard to manage financially. Recently our Helpdesk was contacted by a Surrey resident who has been trying to find an NHS dentist but cannot find one close by. The person has a disability and cannot drive, meaning they need support to get there, or a dentist close by, as they did not have the disposable income to spend on taxis.

We worked with them to find their closest dentist, which was still too far away for them to access without support. The Advisor found the relevant details for community transport and good neighbour schemes to support them in getting to

their appointments. They also gave the person the number for the NHS low-income scheme helpline, so they could get more information about the financial support they may be able to access to cover both travel and dental costs.

Our Helpdesk Advisors have also provided information about [Financial Support available for NHS services](#) which is available on our website.

Encouraging uptake of sight tests for children across Surrey

87 Surrey parents/carers responded to our survey or spoke to us at our community engagement events which took place in areas classified as deprived.

From the responses we are aware that many parents believe the costs of sight tests and glasses are prohibitive and the survey itself provided information to explain the available financial support.

Our subsequent report, [Out of sight, out of mind](#), has been shared with numerous system partners and the knowledge gaps we identified have formed the basis of our new signposting resource: [Sight \(eye\) tests for children and young people](#) to support parents, particularly those with children who are neurodiverse.

A range of system partners are using the insight we shared – and our signposting - to guide their educational work with parents, helping to ensure information around sight tests is positioned appropriately. These partners include Surrey Adult Learning, school nurse teams, family learning tutors, Home School Link Workers and the Best Start Forum which has over 150 practitioners from across Surrey working with children 0-5, parents, carers and families.

We continue this work regarding sight tests by seeking to understand the barriers that may prevent people from Black or Asian minoritised communities from accessing sight tests. We are speaking to people in the community and, to ensure we speak to as many people as possible, we are also running a survey. Within the survey, and when we speak to people, we are also providing information about financial support that is available to people.



Funding care

We know that the cost of care can cause lots of people anxiety as they look to the future.

“He refuses to consider options fully as so worried he will run out of money. I have less money than him and need to support myself financially, so God knows what happens when I need supportive care for myself.”

Earlier this year we undertook a project focussing on current self-funders, and their friends and family with a desire to understand more about their journey to living in a care home, where they looked for information about care homes, and what they understood about paying for care. Surrey County Council commissioned Healthwatch Surrey to understand more about behaviours, motivations and attitudes in planning for care. Our report, [Understanding the self-funder journey to living in a care home - March 2025 | Healthwatch Surrey](#) will help ensure communication is positioned so people are aware at the right stage of seeking care, of both the financial implications and the support that is available.

We have also produced information and videos about Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding as people were contacting our Helpdesk for information. Having met with the CHC team at Surrey Heartlands ICB, we then put together a guide about [Continuing Healthcare](#) which is available on our website. This information has also been shared with various providers across Surrey. We also produced 2 new videos, hearing from people who've actually been through the process. One video is for [Surrey residents](#) and one for our [system partners](#). In them, Maria and David tell their stories and offer some practical hints and tips for those who may need to apply for CHC, and some insights in to how the process really feels to help our system partners to make improvements.



We will continue to support the #EndPovertyPledge, helping to create a poverty-free future.