



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Lewisham

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our Chair

Healthwatch Lewisham is the independent champion for local people – patients, service users and carers – using health and social care services.

This annual report, prepared by our host provider – Your Voice in Health and Social Care – summarises the feedback received, and the research undertaken in the last year.

Like many other organisations, we face uncertainty and change. Nationally, Healthwatch may see changes in the forthcoming NHS 10 Year Plan and the report into national health regulatory bodies (including the Care Quality Commission, the Healthwatch sponsor). Locally, we await the retendering of the Lewisham service which was deferred last year. We have recently moved our base to the Albany Centre in Deptford, and there have also been staff changes. Our small group of staff, including our advocacy team, and our supportive colleagues in Healthwatch Bromley who share our office, are to be congratulated for continuing to focus on supporting local people and for their achievements set out in the report.

We continue to work with other organisations to fulfil our statutory roles effectively. We take an active part in local partnerships with the Council, the NHS, the local voluntary sector and other agencies, and with the local community. Much of this representative work is undertaken by our volunteers, especially our local committee members. A special thank you to them, for their continuing commitment.

Michael Kerin

Chair

Healthwatch Lewisham Local Advisory Committee

This year, Healthwatch Lewisham has continued to deliver exceptional services, championing the voices of our community in health and social care. We published 10 insightful reports highlighting the improvements people want to see in local services.

Our most widely read report, "Trans & Non-binary Health Experience," shed light on the significant challenges faced by this community in accessing healthcare. It has played a crucial role in raising awareness and advocating for more inclusive care. Over the past year, 3,543 people shared their experiences with us, helping to shape better services across the borough. We also carried out 276 engagements and visits to GPs, hospitals, and other care providers, ensuring that we remain closely connected to the community's needs.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all our dedicated staff. A special thank you goes to our incredible volunteers and Local Advisory Committee members—your continued commitment and passion are the backbone of our impact. Without your support, our work would not be as meaningful or far-reaching as it is today.

Tim Spilsbury, CEO, YVHSC

About us

Healthwatch Lewisham is your local health and social care champion.

Our Staff: former and current

Gaby Alfieri
**Operations
Manager**

Jack Burnette
Project Officer

Amos Hosea Kuje
**Patient Experience
Officer**

Internal transition- the above staff changed to below in 2025

Carleen Duffy
Area Manager

Samreen Nawshin
Senior Project Officer

Emmanuel Godwin
**Patient Experience
Officer**



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure 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

We've supported local people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 3 staff and, our work is supported by 30 volunteers. There have been internal team changes towards the end of the financial year, and we now have new staff members on board to drive our work forward.

Reaching out:



3,543 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

96 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **mental health support, GP access and other health & social care services**.

Championing your voice:



We published **10** reports about the improvements people would like to see in health and social care services.

Our most popular report was **Trans & Non-binary Health experience**, highlighting this community's struggles in **accessing healthcare services and their experiences**.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Lewisham Council**. In 2024/25 we received **140,000**, which is the same than last year.

A year of making a difference

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

Spring

Our Maximising Wellbeing project took off it's second phase, where our outreach effort conducted 9 interviews with the participants to gather their feedback on the care they received.



Through our communication channels- online and in-person engagements, particularly our Patient Experience programme, we supported the promotion of Lewisham Council's MMR vaccine clinic, encouraging vaccine uptake.



Summer

After completion of our project on Trans & Non-binary health, we received responses from partners- SLaM specified that our report would help shape their ongoing review of gender policies and inclusive practices.



We delivered a presentation to a GP practice in New Cross as part of our Trans & Non-binary Health project, sharing key findings to support better understanding and more inclusive patient care.



Autumn

Following our Enter & View visit to a care home for people with learning disabilities, we identified service gaps and shared recommendations to enhance residents' experience.



We raised awareness of the NHS Pharmacy First scheme, helping people better understand how to access healthcare more easily without always needing a GP appointment.



Winter

We held an open session with the Meet and Chat Community Group at St Hilda's Church, helping residents better understand the role of Healthwatch and the Independent Advocacy Service.



By attending the dementia cafe at University Hospital Lewisham, we built relationships with the attendees and their carers and heard their experiences of health and social care.



Working together for change

We've worked with our five neighbouring Healthwatch in South East London (SEL) and used our collective influence to ensure people's experiences of care in Lewisham are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at Southeast London ICB.

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

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



South East London Healthwatch is a network of six local Healthwatch organisations. This is a platform to share intelligence, insights and learning on matters of common interest, as well as on significant health and care initiatives across the wider region. The latest insight report features contributions from Healthwatch Lewisham's work with trans and non-binary communities, highlighting experiences and barriers in accessing healthcare services as part of a dedicated project.

Representing the voice of people



Working together as SEL Healthwatch, we amplified the voices of patients, carers, and families to influence key decisions across the system. Their experiences helped shape the SEL ICS strategy, informed the development of the new ICS Digital Strategy to address digital exclusion, and guided meaningful engagement through the creation of the ICS Engagement Toolkit.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



As part of our focus on learning disabilities for the Enter & View programme, we joined a Healthwatch reference group to learn from the experiences of other local teams. Insights from Healthwatch Southwark, in particular, informed our visits to care homes supporting people with learning disabilities. These early conversations, along with collaboration through their networks, helped shape both our approach and observations. We look forward to continuing this collaborative work and building on shared learning.

We've also 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 people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.

Here are some examples of our work in **Lewisham** this year:

Providing regular insight to GP Practices such as

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



In response to a request from South Lewisham Medical Centre, we regularly provided feedback, often weekly, based on insights gathered during our engagement visits. These briefings highlighted areas of good practice and opportunities for improvement, helping the practice to address service gaps and deliver more responsive care. Notably, as a result of our feedback, the GP practice improved their communication with patients and kept them informed upon arrival for their appointments.

Amplifying residents' voices

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



Healthwatch Lewisham continues to offer residents a platform to share their experiences and shape local services. Their experiences and recommendations feed directly into our patient experience programme and have supported meaningful improvements over time—helping build public confidence that community feedback drives real change.

Promoting online consultation

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



In 2024/25, we continued to work closely with Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust following our outpatient experience report. Improvements have already been made to appointment letters and signage, and plans are underway to enhance support for disabled patients and those needing translation. Progress continues, and we remain committed to seeing long-term change for all patients accessing outpatient care.

Listening to your experiences

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

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



Listening to your experiences

Patient Experience Programme

As part of our duty around gathering and representing the views of patients and service users in the borough, Healthwatch Lewisham operates a comprehensive Patient Experience programme.

We gather feedback from residents on their experiences with local health and social care services. These insights are shared with local authorities, commissioners, and the wider public to help evaluate service performance and better understand community needs.

What did we do?

In 2024–25, we published 4 reports capturing residents' experiences across GP practices, hospitals, dental care, and wider social care services. Each quarter, our Patient Experience Programme, supported by dedicated volunteers and led by a Patient Experience Officer, enables us to highlight what's working well and where improvements are needed.

Summary of the programme

3543

Feedback were received throughout the year from a range of health & social care services.

276

Engagements/visits were made to GPs, hospitals, and other services across the borough.



Presented and shared with

Board meetings: At Borough Executive meetings, Health & Wellbeing Board Meetings and other local and South East London meetings to inform and advise decision makers on patient experience.

Others: Practice Managers at GP practices, and local NHS Trusts.

Our work ensures your voices inform local decision-making and drive positive change.

Engagement highlights

This year, in addition to the regular engagements at different healthcare service settings, we have promoted our programme at various events:

- Mental Health Awareness Week event
- Dementia Awareness Week event
- Carers Week Event

Patient Experience Programme – our year in numbers

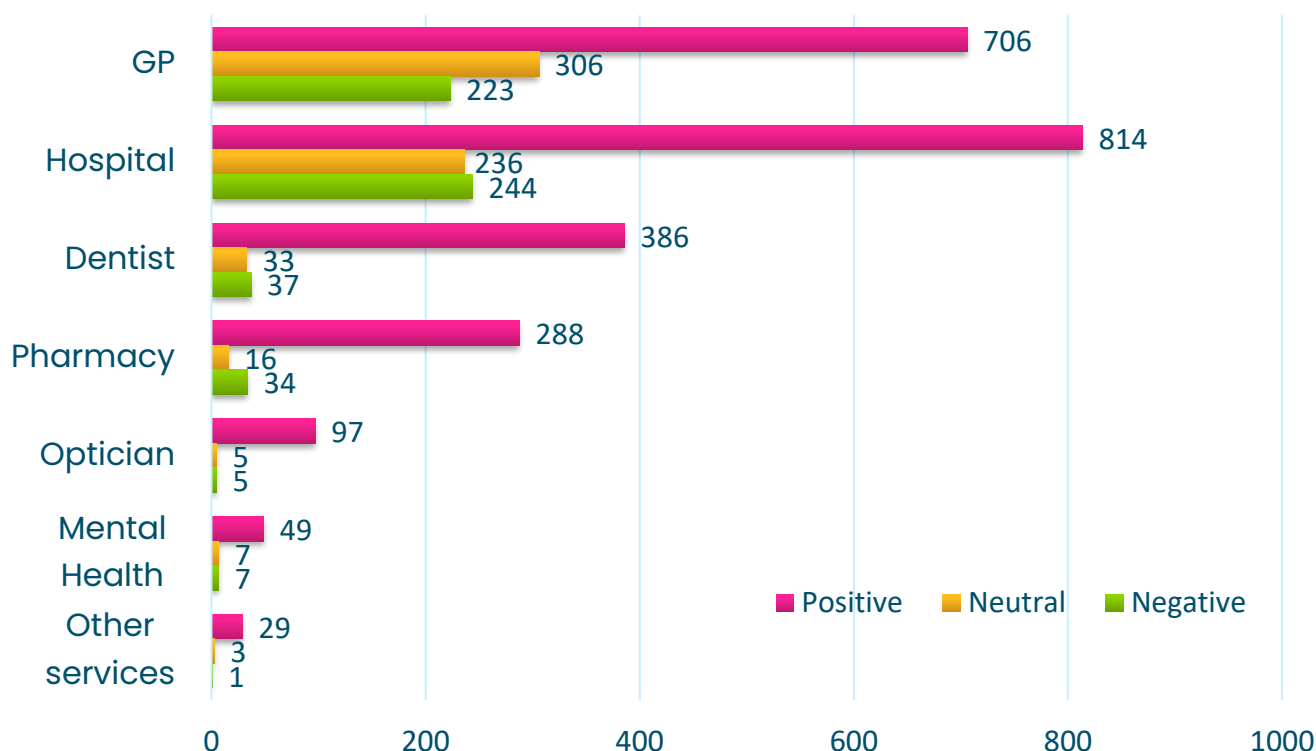
Over the past year, we have published reports based on what local residents of Lewisham told us about general practice, hospital, dental, pharmacy, optometry, and other community services.

What did you tell us about GP services?



- Residents generally had positive experiences with staff behaviour, treatment, and communication.
- However, over the year there were negative experiences with getting through to someone on the telephone, booking an appointment, and especially with waiting times to be seen.
- Appointment availability and online consultations at GP practices, were inconsistent across the borough– while the majority of the residents had very good experiences, some faced difficulties.

An overview of our findings from the year



Moving Ahead for Progress: Recommendations for 2024– 2025

Recommendation	Rationale	Implementation	Body of Responsibility
Improve GP Access and Appointment Booking Systems	Delays and access to appointments remain major concerns.	Introduce advanced online booking systems, increase availability of face-to-face slots, and consider extended hours.	GP Practices and PCNs
Enhance Communication of Test Results	Delays in receiving test results remain a reported concern across multiple quarters.	Upgrade electronic health records (EHRs), automate result sharing via the NHS app, and improve inter-service communication.	Hospitals and GP Practices
Reduce Waiting Times at GPs and Hospitals	Long wait times for appointments and in-clinic delays were among the most frequent complaints, especially at GP. This contributes to patient dissatisfaction and unmet health needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implement triage-based appointment systems to prioritise urgent needs. – Increase use of online and telephone consultations to manage non-urgent cases. – Explore collaborative staffing models to increase appointment capacity. 	GP Practices, PCNs, Hospital Trusts
Improve Communication Between Services (Referrals & Results)	Many patients reported issues with referrals being delayed or lost, as well as poor follow-up on test results from hospital to GP. This affects continuity of care and creates patient anxiety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enable direct messaging between hospital specialists and GPs. – Ensure NHS App and GP portals are updated with referral/test status. – Provide clear information to patients on expected referral timelines. 	Hospitals, GP Practices

Moving Ahead for Progress: Recommendations for 2024– 2025

Recommendation	Rationale	Implementation	Body of Responsibility
Expand Digital Inclusion Training for Remote Access	Elderly and non-English-speaking residents struggle with digital appointments and NHS systems.	Deliver targeted training on how to access online care, especially through libraries and community centres.	GP Practices and PCNs
Provide Enhanced Customer Service Training for Frontline Staff	Receptionists remain a key point of contact but are often cited in negative reviews by patients.	Offer customer service workshops, especially focused on empathy, cultural competence, and accessibility.	Hospitals and GP Practices
Increase Public Awareness of Service Options	Patients often lack understanding of available health services, causing unrealistic expectations.	Run borough-wide education campaigns using digital platforms, posters, and PPG involvement.	PCNs, GP Practices, Healthwatch
Increase Visibility and Awareness of the Complaints Process	Many patients are unaware of how to make a complaint or feel that raising concerns won't lead to action. A clear and accessible complaints process can empower patients and help improve services through feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Display clear, visible information in waiting areas and on practice websites about how to submit complaints. – Provide translated and easy-read versions of the complaints process. 	GP Practices, PCNs, NHS Trusts, Healthwatch Lewisham
Sustain High Standards in Dental, Optician & Pharmacy Services	These services consistently scored high, indicating strong performance that should be maintained.	Continue feedback collection and recognition programs; replicate best practices in lower-performing services.	Dental Practices, Opticians, Pharmacies

Patient Experience Programme

Highlights from feedback on GP Practices and Hospitals

What has been working well:



- Overall, most residents felt that the staff demonstrated a caring and respectful attitude toward patients.
- Patients are generally satisfied with the quality of treatment received from GP practices and Hospital.
- In-person (face-to-face) consultations were perceived to be more effective and appreciated at GP practices.
- Some people appreciated the communication during appointments at GP practices- felt they were clear and supportive.
- Over the past year, most patients highlighted that Hospitals and GP practices' clinical staff are professional and attentive to patient concerns.
- A higher number of people felt listened to and involved in their care decisions.

What is not working well/what could be improved:



- Long waiting times to be seen by the GP negatively affect most patients' experience, especially at the GP practices.
- Difficulty to reach GP practices via telephone remains a common issue for most people.
- Appointment availability at the GP practices are still limited, leading to delays in care.
- Online consultations are often perceived by some patients as impersonal or ineffective.
- There seems to be confusion with the GP practices online booking process- reported by some people.
- Many patients also lamented that delays between referrals and appointment dates from the hospitals need to be addressed.

Listening to your experiences

Amplifying Trans and Non-binary Voices

In 2024, we initiated a comprehensive research project to understand the health and social care experiences of trans and non-binary individuals in Lewisham.

Through in-depth interviews with 20 participants, we uncovered significant challenges, including transphobia, service gaps, and systemic barriers within local healthcare services.

Participants shared stories of systemic barriers, including lack of understanding by professionals, long wait times, difficulty accessing gender-affirming care, and feeling excluded by healthcare systems.

Key things we heard:



75%

of the participants felt healthcare professionals lacked understanding of how to support trans and non-binary people.

60%

said digital and referral systems were difficult to navigate or failed to recognise their identity.



“Doctors and nurses need to be more understanding about disparities between people’s access to gender affirming care... it was hard for me to change my gender marker because I had to show ID, which not everyone has.”

What difference did this make?

Our Trans and Non-binary Health project has had significant local and national impact:

- South London and Maudsley welcomed our report and confirmed it will inform their updated Trans and Non-binary improvement plan. Our recommendations are being embedded into staff training, policy, digital system reforms and inclusive care practices. It has been shared with their EDI group and LGBTQ+ network which prompted a review of signposting and visibility measures including rainbow posters across Lewisham.
- Our insights directly supported Healthwatch England’s national project on trans and non-binary people’s experiences of GP services. They used our findings to shape their research design.
- We received feedback from The Bridge Cafe in Southwark- their clinical lead said our findings will help build the case for expanding trans-inclusive services across South East London ICB.

Listening to your experiences

Maximising wellbeing for residents receiving care at home

We continued to empower the voice of the residents' who received care at home from different service providers in partnership with the local authority.

Throughout 2023–24 and continuing into 2024–25, Healthwatch Lewisham has supported the local authority through the Proud to Care and Maximising Wellbeing programme. Our aim has been to ensure the voices of those with lived experience of homecare are heard and used to shape service improvements.

We have continued to engage regularly with individuals via telephone. Our user forum remains a vital platform for ongoing conversations, enabling service users and carers to share their experiences, connect with one another, and contribute to the future design of services.

Over the course of the project, we produced three reports based entirely on phone conversations and engagement with care recipients and their carers. These reports have been shared with Lewisham Council and key partners.

Our findings highlighted areas of good practice and also identified concerns with specific providers. Where necessary, issues were flagged and upheld, prompting service improvements or follow-up actions.



"I think they do focus on all kinds of care. They do talk to you and connect to you. Sometimes it's a bit of chit chat, but once you get to know someone you can have a proper connection and, especially in my first days [of needing care], that was really important."



"[My wife] is bedbound so getting out and about is a chore. Our new care provider, [unlike WH], used to have a mobility vehicle but don't have this anymore, there is a hoist and a wheelchair, but they don't have a wheelchair accessible vehicle."

What difference did this make?

Listening from this often isolated and vulnerable community made sure that the voices of those receiving homecare directly contributed to scrutiny and service evaluation. As we continue to reflect on its outcomes, we remain committed to championing the needs of people receiving care at home and ensuring their experiences shape future commissioning and quality assurance.

Hearing from all communities

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

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

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Focusing on people with learning disabilities and complex dementia needs via our Enter and View programme
- Setting up user forums for people who receive care at home as part of our Maximising Well-being project.
- Carrying out focus group and individual interviews of Trans & Non-binary communities to learn about their experiences of health services.



Hearing from all communities

Improving experiences for residents with learning disabilities

We visited M Power Learning Disability Home to hear directly from residents, staff, and families as an Enter & View visit.

During our visit, we spoke to residents, staff, friends and families to better understand what life looks like in the home. Residents told us they felt safe, supported, and listened to by staff. Family members shared positive experiences and praised the team's communication and person-centred care. However, we also heard about areas for improvement- including the need for more varied activities, a more structured feedback system, and improvements to physical accessibility and interior upkeep.

What difference did this make?

Reflecting on our findings and recommendations, the home has considered the following actions:

- Activities are under review
- Refurbishment is being considered
- Feedback processes are being strengthened
- Accessibility limitations have been acknowledged, and the management are exploring how they can accommodate less abled residents.

Supporting older people living with dementia at a care home

We heard directly from the people, and their families about their lives at Alexander Care Home.

We visited Alexander Care Home as part of our Enter & View programme where the residents told us they felt safe and well cared for. While overall feedback was positive, some suggested improvements to be considered. These were on areas of having varied activities, clearer signage, safer garden spaces, and meals that reflect a wider range of cultural preferences, etc.

What has changed?

Following our visit and report, the care home provided the following updates:

- Ongoing refurbishments are underway and improvements to garden spaces being made to reduce risk of falls
- New picture and text-based signage has been ordered to enhance navigation
- More cultural dining meal options
- Activity programme expansion tailored for residents based on their interest

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or how to register with a GP or get referrals for specialist care– you can count on us. This year 82 people have reached out to us for advice, or information.

This year, we've helped people by providing up to date information that Lewisham residents can trust, and signpost them to services that can help and support them.



Information and signposting

Healthwatch Lewisham and the Lewisham Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service work together to offer Lewisham residents information, advice, and signposting to appropriate services.

Through this collaborative approach, we draw on the collective expertise of our advocates, Healthwatch staff and Advisory Committee members, all of whom contribute knowledge and insights from their diverse professional backgrounds. This shared knowledge base helps us provide reliable and compassionate guidance.

Over the past year, we've supported residents who contacted us by phone, email and via the website, or at community engagement events.

Some of the most common issues included:

- Finding appropriate care homes for loved ones following hospital discharge.
- Accessing support for ADHD and understanding long waiting times.
- Young carers seeking help and clarity about available support services.
- Helping people with long-term mental health conditions navigate through the NHS prescription penalty process.

How we've helped:

- We offered guidance on hospital discharge processes and signposted families to relevant services, advising them to speak directly with care home managers to ensure the right support is in place.
- We directed residents with ADHD concerns to the appropriate services, such as SLaM and PALS, for advice and further action.
- We connected young carers with organisations like, IMAGO which provides Young Adult Carer Coordinator service, and also linked them with Carers Lewisham to ensure they had a wider support network.
- We explained how prescription charges and penalties are managed, and signposted individuals to the NHS Business Services Authority, their GP, and mental health support from SLaM for further help.

We also encourage residents to share feedback through our various communication channels- email, telephone calls, and website.

Information and signposting

More examples of the enquiries we received in 2024–2025

- Contacts for health complaints advocacy services in other boroughs
- Contacts for Patient Advice Liaison Services (PALS) based at hospitals
- Housing enquiries
- Enquiries about mental health advocacy for people detained under the Mental Health Act
- GP registration or deregistration enquiries
- How to claim transport costs from the NHS
- How does the NHS Complaints process work (from professionals as well as residents)
- How to get appointments with specialist health services
- How to “whistleblow”
- Enquiries about medication shortages
- Where to get help with form filling
- Help to find transport to an important social occasion for someone who has a disability
- Helping a client navigate an online GP contact form
- Enquiries about making medical negligence claims
- How to make a complaint about Lewisham Social Services
- Where to find a befriender service for older people
- How to access NHS Lewisham Talking Therapies
- Advice about employment rights

We also publish a quarterly newsletter sent out by email, currently reaching around 230 subscribers. It contains updates on local health and social care service developments as well as , volunteering opportunities and other relevant news.

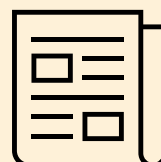


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To subscribe, visit: [Healthwatch Lewisham](#)



Lewisham Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service

Everyone has a right to make a complaint about NHS services. Anyone who wants to complain can ask for free support from their local independent health complaints advocacy service to help them do so. Every local authority is allocated a share of a government grant to fund such a service.

In Lewisham, the advocacy service is run as part of Healthwatch and this collaborative approach brings many benefits. For example, advocates can alert Healthwatch colleagues to complaint trends that may indicate a wider problem within a particular service. Healthwatch can then raise these issues through official NHS channels, or take action to investigate themselves. They may initiate some research, or arrange to visit a particular service to gain views and feedback from patients. Healthwatch can discuss any problems, and how improvements can be made, at their regular meetings with NHS organisations.

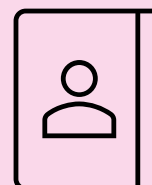
Our advocates have a wealth of knowledge – not only about NHS, but also about other organisations that might offer support to Lewisham residents who contact Healthwatch for advice.

Even though this joint working arrangement used to be commonplace throughout the country, nowadays this is rare. Local authorities in the main commission a different organisation from Healthwatch to provide the advocacy service. Lewisham is one of the few boroughs where Healthwatch and the advocacy service still work as part of the same team.

Get in touch

If you would like some support from our advocacy team, email them at advocacy@healthwatchlewisham.co.uk

Advocates are always happy to visit community groups and GP-based patient participation groups to answer questions about NHS complaints procedure and how complaining can lead to improvements for everyone. Contact us at the same address if you're interested in organising a visit.



Advocacy service: workload

During 2024–2025, advocates worked on 142 new cases

Not all cases involved making a complaint: sometimes advocates helped our clients resolve a problem without complaining.

In addition, advocates continued to support people who had made complaint, or submitted their complaint to the Ombudsman (the final stage of the complaints process) in previous years and who were still waiting for a response.

Most of the new complaints during 2024–2025 were about GP surgeries (57 complaints)

- 38 of the complaints were about hospital experiences.
- 34 were about mental health services.
- 6 were about care offered by dentists.
- 7 were about other providers of NHS care, including privately run ophthalmology services; privately run hospital transport services; community-based physiotherapy services; community-based speech and language services; and NHS Digital.

The most common reasons for making a complaint, or for contacting the advocacy service, during the year were:

- rude, unhelpful and uncompassionate receptionists at GP surgeries.
- difficulties making an appointment at GP surgeries.
- poor quality or inappropriate care from community-based mental health services.
- many years' wait for an assessment for ADHD or autism.

Number of clients we worked with during the year

Q1 (April–June 2024): 114
Q2 (July–September 2024): 104
Q3 (October–December 2024): 104
Q4 (January–March 2025): 87



Complaints can improve health services

NHS complaints submitted by Lewisham residents with the support of the advocacy service can lead to improvements in services that benefit all patients.

We help our clients to submit complaints to GPs, dentists, NHS trusts and other providers of services that are funded by the NHS. As part of that process, complainants state what they hope to achieve by complaining.

Some clients seek outcomes that involve systemic or organisational change that, if implemented, can improve a service for the benefit of all patients.

Sometimes, a complaint investigation will reveal inadequacies that are then addressed as part of the complaint's outcome.

Here are some examples:

- During the investigation of one complaint, it was discovered that a GP surgery was using an outdated adjustment for ethnicity when calculating eGFR (estimated glomerular filtration rate), used to make a diagnosis of chronic kidney disease (CKD). If this adjustment was being used routinely, it could mean many black people were being given incorrect diagnoses of CKD. As a result of the complaint, the GP surgery said the use of this outdated ethnicity calculation for diagnosing CKD had been reviewed and stopped.
- A hospital introduced a new policy to ensure patients get an urgent X-ray if they need one "out of hours". This was as a result of a complaint by a client who was not given an X-ray during the weekend, even though their doctor had asked for it urgently. Now there is an updated Radiation Regulation Policy in place that details a process staff can follow if there is an urgent, out of hours request.
- A Primary Care Network (PCN) [a group of GP surgeries working together] made improvements to its website, making sure visitors know how to make a complaint about the community-based services it runs. This followed a complaint about a physiotherapy service run by the PCN: the client and advocate found it impossible to complain and the advocate had to do some serious detective work to find out how.

What our clients say

All clients who completed a feedback form in 2024–2025 said they were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the support the advocates had given them. All said they would use the service again, and all said they would recommend it to friends and family members.

Here are some of our clients' comments:



"...(the advocate) always went above and beyond. I felt very supported, heard and well informed. It is becoming rare to find such dedication to helping others and the world needs more of it."



"...(the advocate) didn't give up, she was persistent, and because of this, I finally have started to get the much-needed support I had been trying to get for nearly two years without success."



"...I felt supported through a nerve-racking time by her constant communication. She helped me with key information and strategy. Most useful for me were the contacts and procedure she was able to research and pass on, as well as acting as a bridge between me and those in power. She listened to my concerns with understanding and compassion."



"...(the advocate) managed to get me a lot of support that should have been provided and wasn't."



"...(the advocate) could not have been more understanding, caring and compassionate. Finally, after several years of trying to get a diagnosis and some medication appropriate for the condition, we have that, and also have ongoing support from the mental health team. I know for a fact that (the advocate's) help and intervention is the only reason this has been resolved and I am finally getting the help I need."



"...(the advocate) made what was a horrible situation manageable as I felt supported."



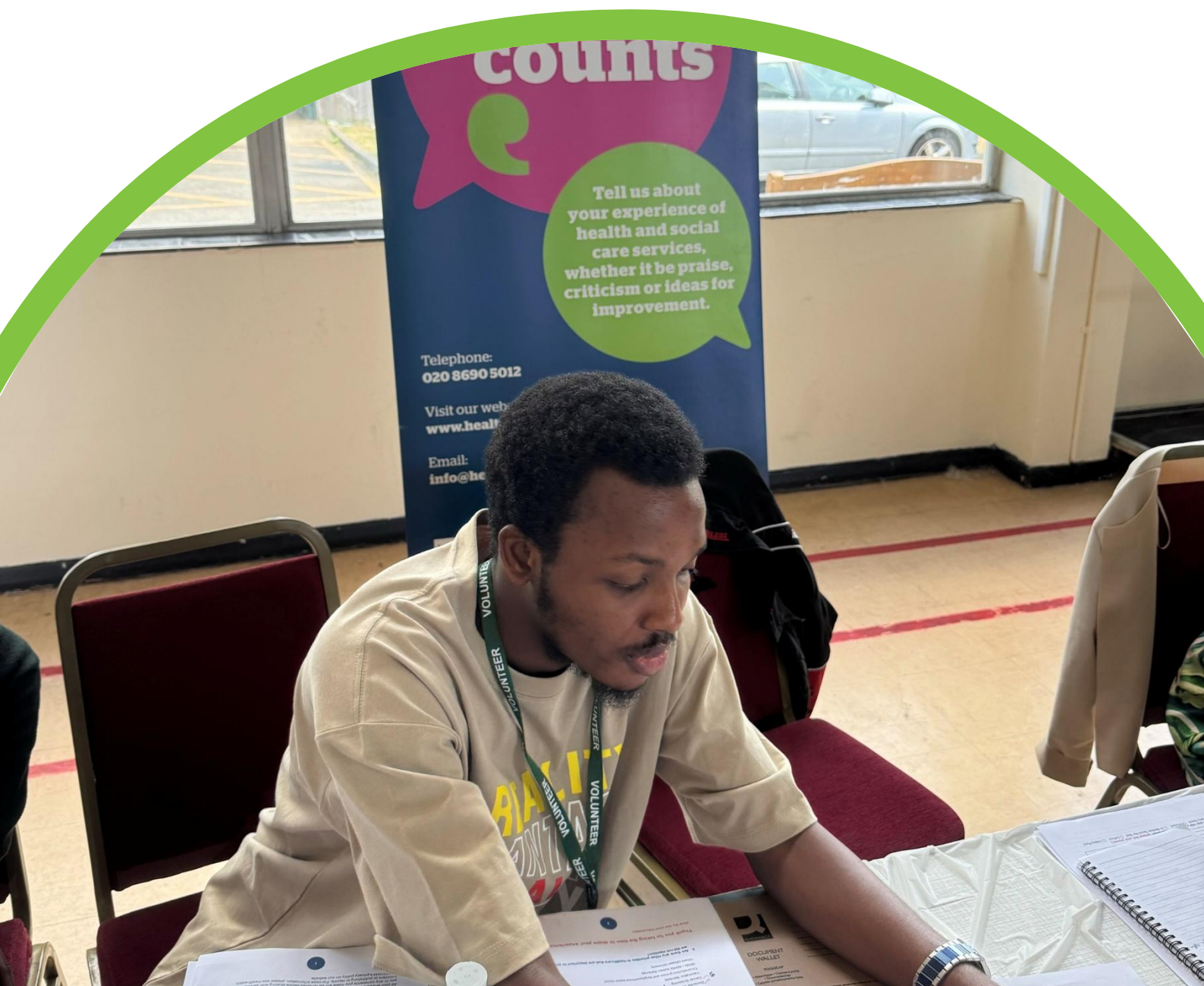
"...my advocate went above and beyond. She was not at all judgmental and took my issue seriously. Her listening skills were exceptional. The outcome of the complaint was excellent."

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 1164 hours, equivalent to 49 days to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote our work.
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Carried out Enter & View visits to local services to help them improve.



Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

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

“Working as a volunteer at Healthwatch has been a worthwhile journey. I have gained insights on issues that affect the healthcare system as I engaged more with the patients. This is particularly important to me as a management student who is focusing on healthcare.

I have been able to understand what works and what needs to be addressed from my visits. I like that speaking to patients has helped build on my communication skills.”

Kelechukwu



“Volunteering with Healthwatch Lewisham has been enriching and eye-opening by offering real-world insights into community health priorities. Engaging with residents has deepened my understanding of health disparities and empowered me to advocate for improved services.

Collaborating with staff and fellow volunteers has enhanced my communication skills and taught me how to gather and analyse patient feedback effectively.

Conducting surveys has reinforced the importance of active listening and empathy in public health practice. This experience motivates me to continue supporting patient-centered healthcare in Lewisham. Currently a Master's Student at York St John University.

Temidayo



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Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

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

"Volunteering has provided me with a meaningful opportunity to advocate for individuals whose voices are often underrepresented. Engaging with patients in GP surgeries and hospitals has been both a humbling and powerful experience. It is deeply rewarding to know that their feedback will be shared with the appropriate health authorities, where it can help inform and improve services."

Vidushanka



"My volunteering journey at Healthwatch Lewisham has been inspiring- embarking to improve health services in the community. It has enabled me to gain valuable experience, collecting feedback from patients at different locations, such as hospitals, GPs, pharmacies, and care homes. As a patient experience volunteer, I worked with service users and partner organisations to listen to people's experiences and ensure that their voices are heard."

Kenneth



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Feedback from partners

While reflecting on our work and impact from the past year, we also invited local partners to do the same by telling us what they think we have done well, and to provide us with suggestions as to what they would like to see more of from us.

This year, partners told us:

- Our reports and insights helped shape national research, service improvement, and community engagement
- Our work supported more inclusive service design through co-production works, safeguarding intelligence, and patient feedback initiatives
- Collaboration with us continues to be essential in embedding resident voice into commissioning and strategic decision-making



Feedback from partners



“The partnership between Lewisham Council and Healthwatch continues to be a vital part of how we commission services with – not just for – our communities. Healthwatch plays a key role in ensuring resident voice is meaningfully embedded across our work, including through projects like Maximising Wellbeing and their Enter & View programme. Their insight supports better strategic decision-making and helps us hold ourselves accountable. As a commissioner, I deeply value the openness, challenge, and collaboration this partnership brings.”

Ruth Kent
Joint Commissioner
Adult Integrated Commissioning



“Lewisham Adult Services at the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust have continued to work closely with Healthwatch Lewisham during 2024-25. This has included following up on the Enter & View visit recommendations about the Ladywell Unit, testing Healthwatch visits to our community sites to gather service user feedback and closer working with the NHS complaints advocacy service that Healthwatch run. We have worked with our colleagues in central SLaM teams to ensure Healthwatch Lewisham is invited to contribute to the Trust Quality Account, and to coordinate our response to the Healthwatch report on trans and non-binary healthcare experiences. Healthwatch Lewisham has participated in engagement events to support the Lewisham SLaM community pilot programme bid to NHS England which was submitted in 2024 and are invited to our monthly Community Links meetings to build connections between SLaM and the voluntary sector. We look forward to working with the new team in 2025-26.

Lucy Hamer
Patient and Public Involvement Lead

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Feedback from partners



"Healthwatch Lewisham has been a vital partner to the Healthier Communities Select Committee, bringing forward the voices, concerns, and lived experiences of patients and the public.

As champions of patients, service users and carers on access and patient experience their contributions have strengthened the committee's ability to hold providers and health partners accountable and promote inclusive, patient-centred care. Their continued engagement is greatly valued."

Cllr Aliya Sheikh

Chair of Healthier Communities Select Committee



"Working with Healthwatch Lewisham over the past year has been a genuinely collaborative and insightful experience. The team has consistently demonstrated a deep understanding of the local health and social care landscape — they're knowledgeable, efficient, and always focused on amplifying the voices of residents. Through initiatives like the Healthwatch 360 feedback, we've been able to reflect, adapt, and strengthen our services in direct response to community needs. It's been encouraging to see how this partnership translates into real-world improvements for the people we serve."

Chloe James

**Service Improvement Lead
Adults Social Care
London Borough of Lewisham**

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Feedback from partners

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“Healthwatch Lewisham has maintained active engagement with the Trust to gather valuable insight into patient experience and satisfaction. Specifically, the Enter and View visits across wards and departments provide a comprehensive view of patient experience which supports the Trust to identify what works well and opportunities for improvement from the perspective of patients and their families. These insights directly inform local service improvements and feed into other sources of data such as the Friends and Family Test Survey and national patient surveys to shape the wider improvement priorities across the Trust.

One notable area of progress is the enhancement of outpatient services, which continues to evolve in response to patient feedback captured through a Healthwatch Outpatient Survey conducted the previous year. One example is the new, standardised appointment cancellation letter which has been implemented. This revised letter is compliant with the Accessible Information Standard, incorporating bold text in key areas and increased font sizes to improve readability. It also includes clear contact information for the relevant service. There is also a process for staff to follow up with patients by calling and sending a letter when there is a cancellation at short notice. These changes will significantly improve the experience for patients and carers.

Their regular attendance at the bi-monthly Patient Experience Committee meetings provides valuable feedback and insight from local communities, ensuring that the voices of patients and carers are heard and acted upon. In addition, the partnership work has continued through support with information sharing between the Trust and their community networks, including requests for patient representatives to support ongoing improvement work.

The Trust is also working towards stronger alignment with Healthwatch on key transformation projects and engagement initiatives, ensuring the patient voice continues to play a central role in shaping future service development.”

Michelle Acquah
Patient Experience Manager
Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust

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Feedback from partners



"The Lewisham Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) continued to work closely with Healthwatch Lewisham during 2024-25, sharing intelligence which helped to inform the Enter & View programme, and conversely in helping LSAB to continue to build the local picture in terms of the risk of abuse and neglect. There was also collaboration on specific projects where there was mutual interest, such as the long-term focus on digital exclusion, and capturing the voice of service users.

We look forward to assessing where priorities can be further aligned during 2025-26 and strengthening the relationship between the two partnerships."

Martin Crow

Business Manager

Lewisham Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB)



"Our discussions with Healthwatch Lewisham on Trans & Non-binary health were instrumental in getting our Healthwatch England project running – especially the work on systems. The focus on administration and systems helped us to narrow down our research focus within our survey on trans and non-binary people's experiences of GP services. My appreciation to Healthwatch Lewisham for helping to provide resources that we were able to use as a springboard for our report. As it was a recent, comprehensive piece of work by a Healthwatch Lewisham, we were able to use the report in our project research proposal, which helped get it to development."

Astor Gilliland

Research and Insight Analyst

Healthwatch England



"Healthwatch collaboratively worked on a feedback survey for people who use our service, health watch listened to our views sensitively, aid us to gather the intelligence we need to improve and develop more tailored service delivery."

Lynnette Dias

Adults Social Care

Lewisham Council

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Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£140,000	Expenditure on pay	£120,000
Additional income	£8,400	Non-pay expenditure	£12,000
		Office and management fee	£16,400
Total income	£148,400	Total Expenditure	£148,400

Additional income is broken down into:

- £8,400 from CQC for work on a project.

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

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

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

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Community mental health- gathering insights and experiences from the residents accessing mental health services in Lewisham as part of our Patient Experience Programme and also a deep dive research study.
2. Highlight experiences of people who have used services from Adult Social Care of Lewisham Council.
3. Co-production to build the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams Model in Lewisham.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ Your Voice in Health and Social Care (YVHSC).

Healthwatch Lewisham 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 8 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 2024/25, the Board met 4 times and promoted actions on matters such as **encouraging co-production with patients, users and carers in the local health and care system and giving more attention to supporting people without digital skills**. 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 2024/25, 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 and social media platforms and distribute it to local partners.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had 1 provider 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.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Healthier Communities Select Committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in South East London Integrated Care System and are represented at 16 boards, committees and groups with our regional Healthwatch partners.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **Lewisham** is represented on the **Lewisham** Health and Wellbeing Board and the Lewisham Health and Care Partnership Strategy Board by **Michael Kerin, Chair of Healthwatch Lewisham**.

During 2024/25, our representative **has effectively carried out this role by drawing attention to our research and findings, where relevant, and to the need for engagement by service users and carers, and the wider public, in decision-making.**

Healthwatch **Lewisham** is also represented **on a range of other local committees and partnership boards, including the Integrated Quality & Assurance Group, the Council's Healthier Communities Select Committee, the Lewisham Safeguarding Adults Board, the LGT Patient Experience Group and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Working Group.**

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Alexander Care Home	To review Dementia care as part of focus on the boroughs Dementia Strategy	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on them and has undertaken refurbishment work, improved their garden spaces and incorporated cultural meal choices
M Power Care Home	To talk to people with learning disabilities whose voices often go unheard	We wrote a report with recommendations – the service improved signage, introduced stronger feedback systems

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Maximising Wellbeing at Home	The often vulnerable and isolated communities are residents receiving care at home. We have empowered their voice by listening to their experiences with the Maximising Wellbeing programme. As a result, we have shared their feedback with partners, highlighting good practices and providing recommendations for scopes of improvements.

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Patient Experience Programme	Our regular engagement at different healthcare settings to collect patient feedback provided valuable insight from local communities, ensuring that the voices of patients and carers are heard and acted upon. In addition, the partnership has continued through support with information sharing between the Trust and their community networks, including requests for patient representatives to support ongoing improvement work.
Enter & View Visits	The visits that we conducted across different wards and departments of the University Hospital Lewisham supported the Trust to identify what worked well and scopes of further improvement from the perspective of patients and their families. Our findings and recommendations have directly led to local service improvements and fed into other sources of data such as the Friends and Family Test Survey and national patient surveys to shape the wider improvement priorities across the Trust.

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Trans & Non-Binary Health	<p>This seldom heard community felt recognised and seen by sharing their experiences with us.</p> <p>Our findings have helped shape the national Trans & non-binary survey by Healthwatch England.</p> <p>We have also been able to inform service improvements by SLaM who have shared our recommendations with their staff involved in research around the needs of LGBTQ+ people, as well as give more insights to their EDI manager to work on their current improvement plan to focus on trans and non-binary services and staff.</p> <p>This project has also given grounds to primary care clinics to push for an expansion of primary clinics for trans and non-binary service users in Lewisham.</p> <p>Our report was presented to Trust-wide Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Group, where EDI developments are agreed to inform some of the discussions that are underway about options for staff training/information about LGBTQ+ service user's needs.</p>

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Outpatient Survey Project	<p>As part of a project conducted in 2023, there has been a notable progress in the outpatient services within the Trust. This continues to evolve in response to patient feedback captured through the survey. One example is the new, standardised appointment cancellation letter which has been implemented. This revised letter is compliant with the Accessible Information Standard, incorporating bold text in key areas and increased font sizes to improve readability including clear contact information for the relevant service. Additionally, there is also a process for staff to follow up with patients by calling and sending a letter when there is a cancellation at short notice. These changes would significantly improve the experience for patients and carers.</p>

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