



Healthwatch Lewisham

Intelligence Themes
January – June 2018



Contents

Accessible Information Standard Report	3
Healthy Eating Report	4
Social Care Report	5
Men's Mental Health Report	6
Advocacy Service themes	7
People with learning disabilities talk appointments	8
Parkinson's Group	9
University Hospital Lewisham	10
GP Practices	11



Findings from our Accessible Information Standard report

During our project we spoke to people with disability or sensory loss about their experiences of access and communication relating to local health services.

Many people with additional communication needs may not have the confidence to assert their needs or ask for help.

People, especially those with long-term conditions requiring frequent contact with services, feel they often repeat themselves to the same providers and need to re-explain their communication needs.

Many disabled people are continuing to be contacted by means that are not accessible for them, such as small print letters for people with sight loss and using the telephone to contact deaf people.

People with sight loss told us that they appreciated emails and texts rather than receiving letters.

People with sensory loss or learning difficulties reported that the process of getting to their appointment from the reception area posed a great barrier. Many felt lost and confused, especially in larger waiting areas shared by many clinics and services and had difficulty orientating themselves.

Deaf people reported difficulties in accessing Sign Language interpreters, for example during social care assessments or during medical appointments.

People with severe communication needs rely on the assistance of a carer and value the help they provide with their communication.

Food for Thought/ CYP healthy eating report

Findings

There was a significant disparity between parents and children's perceptions of their diets. Our summer survey found that 80% of parents agreed or somewhat agreed that their children ate the recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. However, only 18 % of children thought the same as their parents.

We found that the children were often surprised at the amounts of sugar and salts in foods. Many children also didn't know how to read labels to find nutritional value or the content of fats, salt and sugars.

6% of children who took part in our healthy eating workshop said that they did not partake in any physical activities or exercise outside of school.

Recommendations

We believe that there is a big advantage to educating young children about healthy eating. Earlier education might help combat health problems in later life. We also encourage schools to hold healthy eating sessions with parents and teaching assistants to help reinforce good habits - especially in areas of high deprivation.

Schools should allow children to bring water and fruit into the classroom. This would encourage children to increase their uptake of water and consumption of fruit.

Schools to be encouraged to take part in the Daily Mile initiative. The Daily Mile sees children run or jog for 15 minutes every day in their primary and nursery schools.

Themes from our social care report

Access

It is key that people are able to contact social care services when they need to by means that are accessible for them such as telephone call, text, email, etc.

Having to wait on the phone for long periods when calling social services was raised as a barrier and should be addressed.

People would welcome a prompt response after they make contact with social care services.

Social activities are valued by people with learning disabilities. There is a need for an increased variety in activity provision.

Quality of care

It is essential for front line staff to be kind, caring, friendly and sensitive to cultural, equality and diversity issues.

Consistency of the care workers is vital along with good continuation procedures in case of absence.

Punctuality is an important part of providing good social care. Planning of the care worker rota/shits should consider traffic levels and commute times.

Ensuring the care plan is adhered to; for example, completing required tasks and spending allocated time fully with the client.

Care workers are valued and appreciated. However, the quality of the provision is inconsistent and, in some instances, requires improvement.

Communication

Language used by social care staff, especially care workers, is important for patients and carers. It is vital to use clear language that is free of jargon.

Being treated with dignity and respect is a key aspect of providing good care.

It is important to provide accessible information and communication methods, such as phone calls for those who do not use the internet.

Clear explanation of eligibility for social care services is required.

People appreciate it when their different care options available are clearly explained to them.

Carers

Provision of a respite break is valued by carers. It helps to maintain their good health and wellbeing.

Many carers reported being under a lot of pressure and stress. It was felt that the mental health of carers should be considered by social care services.

It is important for carers to have a meaningful input into the assessment process for the person they support.

Themes from our Men's mental health project

Masculinity

The traditional concept of masculinity was a key factor that prevented men accessing services early.

This concept was often instilled by upbringing, family and the wider community.

Isolation

Men isolate themselves when experiencing mental health issues as a coping mechanism in response to societal and cultural pressures. Family breakdowns and complete loss of support networks were common themes.

Having a trusted person to speak to, a friend, or a support group was recognised as a need.

Employment

Men feared disclosing their mental health issues to employers to avoid appearing 'weak' and experiencing negative consequences.

Support

Community services such as counselling and support from charities were recognised as the men's preferred methods for improving their mental health and wellbeing.

Men would value services that are shaped to suit the needs of men and recognise issues men face. Worryingly only 10% of the survey respondents agreed men receive the right support for their mental health.

Themes from our NHS complaints advocacy service

Waiting Times

Several complaints have been made about long waiting times to book an appointment at their GP practice.

Staff Attitudes

People are unhappy with what they deemed a lack of empathy/consideration from the medical staff.

Dental complaints

We have seen a rise in the number of complaints about dental services. Residents told us that their teeth had been damaged as result of mistakes by the dentist.

Some felt that they had been misinformed when given treatment advice.

Patients found it difficult to engage with their dentist.

Medical Records

Several cases involved residents being unable to retrieve their medical records after moving GPs.

Lack of consistent complaints information

Our advocates have found that there is wide variation in the quality of complaints information provided on local health services websites. It was difficult to locate any complaints information on a significant number of GP websites.

PALS

Difficulty contacting the Patient and Advice Liaison Service (PALS) at University Hospital Lewisham has been experienced by patients, carers and our advocates.

What people with learning disabilities told us about appointments and annual health checks

Flexible

Make medical appointments accessible and flexible - Several members of the group said that they would prefer to have an appointment in the evening rather than the morning.

Home appointments

Carers advocated for home appointments as some of the people they care for would be distressed by having to visit a GP practice.

Familiarity

One carer suggested that health services could provide pictures of their buildings in order to ease the concerns of people for who do not like unfamiliar settings. They explained that the use of pictures had helped someone he cared for attend GP appointments.

People explained that they would more likely to attend an appointment if they were familiar with the health professional.

Communication

It was agreed that they would like to receive reminders about their appointments by phone call or text.

They would prefer appointment confirmation letters to be in an easy read format.

Several people told us that they had attended an appointment once they received a reminder on the day of the appointment.

Support

The need for carers to help book, prepare for and attend medical appointments was identified by many people.

Annual Health Check

Service users don't always understand what the point of a health check is. If they are fit and healthy they don't think there is any need for them to undergo a health check. They suggested that people would attend a health check if they were told about why it is important for them to have an annual health check.

Findings from engagement with a Parkinson's support group

Neurology Department at University Hospital Lewisham

Patients complained about the neurology department at UHL. They felt it is run down and there are not enough consultants. When people try to contact the department they usually find that no one is available. Similarly, the group explained that it's extremely difficult to speak to consultants and that access depends on the schedule of the consultant's secretary

Patients complained about their medication being changed without their prior knowledge. One patient said they tried to call the department to speak to someone and get some answers in relation to this, but were unsuccessful each time. Several people explained that the change of medication was not being relayed to their GP either. The group shared similar experiences of having to regularly follow up issues such as changes to medication, due to a lack of communication between those involved in their care pathway.

Continuity of health professionals was another issue raised by the group. Patients found it frustrating having to speak to a different consultant each appointment. Patients felt they often have to 'educate' the medical professionals rather than the other way around. One patient carries a note with him to request administration of his regular medication with a simple explanation for why he needs this specific medication.

Patients were concerned that there are no specialist Parkinson's nurses at the hospital.

University Hospital Lewisham

Hospital transport was raised as an issue with several people citing long waiting times at the hospital. They also believe that there is a shortage of equipment available to help transport people in wheelchairs.

Some people were unhappy that the prescriptions from the out of hours GP service located at the hospital were not granted at the hospital pharmacy.

What people have told us about University Hospital Lewisham

Overall experience

Patient's experiences of University Hospital Lewisham (UHL) continue to be mixed. Our data shows that residents are having vastly different experiences even when using the same hospital services.

Quality of treatment

The majority of patients praised the hospital for the quality of treatment they received and the caring attitudes of nurses and doctors. These two issues are intertwined and many equate staff attitudes with the quality of service they are given.

Access

Access to hospital services is becoming a significant issue for patients in the borough. In the last few months, numerous people have contacted our signposting service explaining that they are unable to speak to anyone on the phone at several departments in the hospital.

These include: Orthopaedics, Neurology, ENT and Radiology.

Access to the Radiology Department is currently an ongoing issue with people trying to rearrange appointments but when they call the service no-one picks up the phone. We have highlighted this issue with the Patient and Advice Liaison Service (PALS).

A & E

Opinions of the Accident and Emergency Department at UHL have slightly improved since January.

Most patients praise the level of treatment. However, long waiting times are still troublesome. Patients shared experience of having to wait in excess of four hours.

Maternity

The Maternity department continues to be singled out for praise by patients. They commended the staff for their caring nature and for keeping them informed throughout their treatment at the hospital.

What people have told us about GP practices

Quality of treatment

During the last six months, residents continue to be extremely positive about the treatment and advice they receive from their GP practice. This was expressed across the entirety of the borough.

Referrals

We have been told about a lack of communication around referrals after patients visit GP practices. Several patients explained that they had to follow up their referrals because they hadn't heard anything weeks after being referred. We were also told that some residents found that they hadn't been referred as expected and they weren't given an explanation about why their referral hadn't been processed.

Walk-in Centre

By the end of June, we found that the majority of resident, Healthwatch spoke to are aware that the New Cross Walk-in Centre has closed.

The issue we identified earlier where several GP practices were still signposting people to the Walk-in Centre on their out-of-hours messages has now been resolved.

Appointments

Access to GP appointments remains the biggest issue for residents. Since January, we have seen an increase in the number of people reporting frustration with access.

People shared experiences of having to wait a couple of weeks for an appointment, however it must be noted that a significant number of people were happy to wait that length of time if they saw their chosen doctor.

On the other hand for those who wanted urgent appointments this timeframe was unacceptable.

Merger

We hold regular engagement hubs at South Lewisham Group Practice. Patients told us that they continue to receive a good level of care from their doctors.

They have, however, pointed out that it has become increasingly difficult to book an appointment that is convenient for them. They do not necessarily believe this is a result of the merger between their practice and the Winlaton Surgery.