



Healthwatch Lewisham Intelligence Report

February to July 2019

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Introduction

Healthwatch Lewisham is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. We listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved and we share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about provision in their area.

We have the power to ensure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage organisations to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

Our intelligence report highlights the key findings and themes that emerged from the experiences Lewisham residents shared with us, during February 2019- July 2019.

**Share your views
and help make
local NHS
services better**



what
would you do?

Targeted Engagement

As part of our remit, we carry out targeted engagement based on priorities which are determined by Lewisham residents. Our priorities which started last year and have carried over into 2019-20 are:

- Mental Health
- Access to Services
- Disadvantaged groups (children and young people and older people)

BME Cancer Engagement

In May 2019, Healthwatch Lewisham engaged with residents at an event called “Lifting the lid on cancer in the BME community” which was held in Lewisham by a charity called Trekstock.

The event encouraged young adults in their 20s and 30s living with cancer to share their own experiences and start a conversation by raising awareness of the issues within BME communities. The group consisted of a variety of different nationalities and ethnicities including Turkish, Guyanese, Chinese, Egyptian, Nigerian and Caribbean.

Top themes:

Stigma and taboo

- The young adults collectively felt that stigma around cancer exists within their communities. There is a strong held belief that people should “**keep their business to themselves.**” For example, the family of a young Asian woman wanted her cancer diagnosis to be kept secret, because they feared that admittance would impact on her chances of getting married.
- Because there is a lack of open conversation about cancer within BME communities, there is a false perception that cancer does not exist within the community or that incidences are low. The group felt that numerous people do not have cancer screenings because they are unaware it is a possibility.
- There are a significant number of cultural myths about cancer. For example, several people explained that their family believed that cancer could be contagious and distanced themselves because they ‘**didn’t want to catch it**’.
- Many of the young people told us that they were alienated from their families because of the illness. Their families had reacted negatively and felt ashamed due to a strong-held belief that cancer is a “**curse**”. It should be noted that several people kept repeating the phrase “**I’m not a bad person**” when sharing their experiences.
- A woman explained how her family was trying to make sense of her illness. She was told that ‘**God was testing her or that God was calling her closer or God is cleansing your sins**’. She did not think this attitude was conducive to helping her emotionally handle her cancer treatment.
- A young woman in her late teens was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. She was on a hospital ward and a lot of the friends she had made had died. She was frightened because she was the last person on the ward who was BME.

She felt that there wasn't anyone else she could relate to. Later, she found out that one of her young relatives had undergone treatment, but the family had kept it a secret.

- During the event, issues around cancer treatment and Ramadan were mentioned.

Advice against treatment

- A significant number of the group had been advised not to receive cancer treatment for varying reasons.
- Some of the young adults shared experiences of being told that they should not “take treatment because it is ungodly.” Similarly, another patient was encouraged not to undergo chemotherapy and should “Trust in God, God is going to heal you.”
- One patient described their experience as being emotionally difficult “I felt so scared. I thought I'm going to die. I wanted to get hope from someone.” Her family and family friends were advising her to not get treatment and reinforced this by telling negative stories.
- Some families were telling their children that taking medicine would be the worst decision of their life and that they would regret it. Similarly, other people were told to ignore medication and instead drink/eat certain food and drinks which would help cure their condition.

Cultural barriers

- The group highlighted the additional barriers that exist for people who don't speak English as their first language. They explained that there is less awareness about cancer in certain cultures. For example, one person's mother did not know what cancer is. Whilst, another person said that in their language there is no word for cancer. These barriers meant that their parents were unable to adequately offer emotional support.

Raising awareness

- It was agreed that people do not speak up about their condition and harbour a lot of issues relating to their diagnosis.
- The group felt that going forward it is important to work together and raise awareness. There is a need for positive role models from BME communities to talk about living with cancer. This could enable young BME people to openly discuss their conditions.

Additional feedback:

- There was a consensus that more data needs to be collected about cancer and ethnicity. A better understanding of its impact in BME communities should help improve outcomes for patients.
- The group highlighted the importance of having a specialist nurse who was able to clearly explain their condition and treatment options.
- Charities and community support groups were considered invaluable as they enabled a platform for young people with cancer to come together and discuss their issues in a comforting environment.
- Family support is essential, those who do not have this type of support find it more difficult to emotionally come to terms with their illness.

60 Up Engagement

Earlier this year, we engaged with the members of 60 Up, a community organisation which aims to help those over the age of 60 remain independent, whilst lending support and encouragement to those less active. Through the provision of social, recreational, cultural and educational activities, they enable older people to take charge of their personal development. From listening to the experiences of their members, we learnt the following:

Positive

- Pharmacies are considered a valuable resource for advice on minor ailments. This has meant that members of the group are no longer accessing their GP practice as often.
- Honor Oak Group Practice (HOGP) was singled out for the way it communicated with its patients. The group appreciated being sent appointment reminders via letter or text message. Members also valued receiving reminders about annual check-ups and eligibility for certain treatments such as flu jabs, health checks, screenings etc.
- Doctors at HOGP were praised for providing appropriate referrals in a timely manner.
- The call back system and phone consultations at GP practices received positive reviews. Doctors had been able to prescribe medication over the phone which meant patients did not have to visit their surgeries.
- The 111 service was highlighted for being responsive and effective.

Negative

- Difficulties in booking appointments at some GP surgeries was mentioned as an issue. Patients were frustrated at having to wait on average 2-3 weeks to get an appointment, without any guarantee they would see their “own” doctor or a doctor of their choice.
- A participant shared concerns about how difficult they found it to book an urgent appointment when calling their GP practice in the morning.
- Length of appointment times was important to group members. The standard duration of appointments (10 minutes) was criticised for being insufficient time to describe all of their symptoms.
- Group members were also frustrated that they are limited to discussing only one issue per appointment. They were worried that seemingly unrelated issues can often be the result of the same illness or condition. Not being able to mention all of their symptoms could increase the risk of misdiagnosis.
- A patient was unhappy with the appointment system at Triangle Group Practice. During an appointment, she had been advised by the doctor to book a follow up. However, when she spoke to the receptionist, she was told to call back in the morning to arrange the appointment. The patient was confused and frustrated that she had not been allowed to make an appointment whilst in reception.

Improving complaints information in Lewisham



Service user feedback is an important aspect of any organisation's growth and stability. Complaints are a form of feedback that can be used to improve services.

Patients who use GP websites should be able to access complaints information and any documents needed to file a complaint. Information should be readily available, without patients having to contact the surgery directly.

We embarked on a project to assess the existence and standard of complaints information on practice websites.

We found that thirteen of the GP surgeries either had no information or extremely limited text. A common practice amongst websites with poor information was to refer patients to visit the reception to obtain further details about the complaints procedure. The limited information meant that patients could not file a complaint without further contact with their surgery.

Focusing on the 24 GP practices that provided complaints information on their website, we found that:

- 15 informed patients that their complaints will be acknowledged within three working days as stated in the NHS Constitution.
- 13 informed patients of what the next steps will be following the acknowledgment of their complaint.
- 14 provided the name of the practice manager or an equivalent person to whom the complaint should be addressed.
- Although a significant number of practices had options to enlarge or translate text, none of the GP surgeries provided the information in an easy read format.

Analysis of the websites showed that there were a handful of GP practices that provided a high level of information regarding complaints. We have highlighted these practices as examples of good practice.

Good Practice

Amersham Vale Training Practice
Deptford Surgery
Lewisham Medical Centre

Clifton Rise Family Practice
Kingfisher Medical Centre
Woodlands Medical Centre

We were pleased to find several local examples of good practice in the provision of complaints information. However, it would be helpful if the information provided locally was consistent and of good quality. To enable this, we created a template that GP practices could adopt and incorporate on their websites.

The template was developed by using a combination of guidance from NHS England, Lewisham Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy Service and local organisations that support people with disabilities.

Ten GP surgeries have responded directly to our recommendations and already made updates to their websites. Furthermore, One Health Lewisham, the GP Federation, has agreed to implement our complaints template as the standard model for all GP practices in the borough. As a result, residents will now have greater access to information on how to make a complaint and what support services are available.

All of the findings and recommendations from our complaints report can be found by clicking [here](#).

Do health and care services know what you really think?

By sharing your ideas and experiences you can help services hear what works, what doesn't, and how care could be better in the future.

Tell us what you think and help make care better.

healthwatchlewisham.co.uk

Supporting **NHS 70**

healthwatch
Lewisham

it starts with **YOU**

Accessible Information Standard Mystery Shop



In 2016, the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) was introduced by the government to make sure that people with a disability or sensory loss are given information in a way they can understand. It is

now the law for the NHS and adult social care services to comply with AIS.

In 2017, we carried out a project which looked at the implementation of the Standard at University Hospital Lewisham and local GP practices.

Building on our previous work, we began a project to assess the local implementation of the Standard in pharmacies and opticians. We partnered with the National Citizen Service, a programme that empowers 15-17 year olds to volunteer in their local communities. The young people were tasked with carrying out a mystery shop to a total of **ten** pharmacies and opticians.

Of the ten pharmacies and opticians visited, three declined to answer the survey. Therefore, our findings cover the seven pharmacies and opticians that participated in the survey.

Although our sample size was small, it should be recognised that more than half of the staff we spoke to were unaware of the AIS. However, staff members at two of those services had recently undertaken disability awareness training.

We found that there was a significant variation in how the pharmacies and opticians recorded the communicational needs of patients. For example, one service captured and shared details about patient's communications needs via verbal feedback or written notes. On the other hand, another added the information to a patients' digital record.

Supplementary services such as the availability of sign language interpreters were offered by several of the primary care services. Cost was a barrier cited by pharmacies and opticians to making facilities more accessible.

Following our project, we recognise more work should be carried out looking into the implementation of the Accessible Information Standard across the borough. There is a need for the AIS to be included in disability awareness training for staff within pharmacies and opticians.

Enter and View

One of our functions is to carry out Enter and View visits into health and social care services in the borough.

The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch Authorised Representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.

Fieldside Residential Care Home



Earlier this year, we used our powers of Enter and View to visit Fieldside Residential Care Home. The CQC had rated the service as “Requires improvement” in July 2018 and we wanted to hear from residents and staff to understand what progress the home was making.

Our staff and Authorised Representatives were impressed by the service provided at the care home. We found the home to be cosy, pleasantly decorated and extremely clean. It was clear to see that residents were benefitting from a longstanding and caring staff team.

Residents were appreciative of the wide variety of meals and activities available to them. Fieldside staff told us that they felt supported in their work and that the service is well run.

After talking with staff and residents, we felt improvements could be made to the way information is displayed and feedback is collected. The service could also make a few small changes to help the living environment become more dementia friendly. We suggested the following recommendations:

- All communal information should be simplified and easily accessible. The use of large fonts, colour and images will make it easier for residents to understand
- Staff may benefit from refresher training around dementia awareness
- The feedback box should be regularly stocked and an alternative medium for giving feedback needs to be introduced.

After sharing our report with Fieldside Care Home, they told us that they are actively working to implement our recommendations.

The full findings and recommendations from our report can be found [here](#).

The Harbour

We also used our powers of Enter and View this year to visit The Harbour, a mental health crisis café based in University Hospital Lewisham.

The Harbour is run in partnership between Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, South London and Maudsley (SLaM) NHS Trust and Certitude, a mental health charity. The service aims to provide a safe, supportive environment for adults in a mental health crisis, as an alternative to using other crisis services. It has been in place since January 2019 and is an entirely new service.

The purpose of our visit to The Harbour was based on our priorities of access to services and mental health, as chosen by Lewisham residents. The Enter and View visit gave us the opportunity to hear patients' views on a new mental health service in Lewisham.

Our staff and volunteers were impressed with the space and the service provided at The Harbour. Efforts to create a safe, therapeutic and supportive environment were evident. Staff were found to be committed to their work and effective in their support of people who access the service. Feedback was regularly captured from users and used to enhance the patient experience.

“I am very glad this initiative exists and I wish there were more spaces like this throughout the country.” (Lewisham resident)

Staff recognised that because the service is relatively new there is room for improvement. Through observation and interviews, we felt changes could be made to the information available and awareness of the service, activities scheduled, and communication between staff teams.

We recommended that a dedicated webpage needs to be created to provide key information about the service. Making information available online will help raise awareness amongst professionals and enhance their ability to make referrals.

It was felt that a greater availability of group activities would be beneficial and create a comfortable setting for people who are supported during their visit to the café by their carer, friends or family members.

Harbour staff also suggested the need for regular meetings between colleagues across the different organisations to provide a platform to raise any issues and improve service co-ordination.

Certitude found our report to be very useful and stated that it provided them with further understanding on what is working for patients and staff users and the things they would like to improve.

Following our project, they have confirmed that more information will be made available on their website, team meetings will be organised and group activities have begun to be implemented.

The full findings and recommendations from our report can be found [here](#).

Healthwatch Lewisham NHS Long Term Plan engagement

Local Healthwatch in south east London were commissioned by our national body and NHS England to obtain the views and experiences of residents to support the local implementation of the NHS Long Term Plan. (LTP) The SEL report's findings have been shared with Our Healthier South East London (OHSEL) to help shape the local plan and support OHSEL's own engagement.

Each Healthwatch carried out individual engagement in their own borough. We used a mixed methodology to gather feedback which consisted of two focus groups and surveys.

The topics of the focus groups were agreed with our local STP and focused on participants experiencing ill mental health and people with learning disabilities/Autism. Over 250 residents, patients, carers and their families shared their views as part of the "What Would You Do?" surveys that ran from March to June to encourage people in Lewisham to explain what matters most to them.

What is most important to you?	
What is most important to you to help you live a healthy life?	Access to the help and treatment I need when I want it
What's most important to you to be able to manage and choose the support you need?	Choosing the right treatment is a joint decision between me and the relevant health and care professional
What is the most important to you to help you keep your independence and stay healthy as you get older?	I want to be able to stay in my own home for as long as it is safe to do so
What is most important to you when interacting with the NHS?	I can talk to my doctor or other health care professional wherever I am

Summary of key findings

- Residents felt there needs to be quicker access to mental health support. They suggested that doctors in GPs and hospitals could benefit from mental health training to better support people with their issues.
- Those who experienced mental ill health felt it was important to receive regular support and follow up care. The availability of a good and responsive care coordinator was necessary in ensuring a high level of treatment.
- Patients suggested the IAPT service would benefit from offering a more thorough assessment which would lead to better diagnosis and suitable treatment.
- Easier and faster access to health professionals, especially GPs, was the most popular answer when people were asked to point out one thing that would help them to successfully manage their health and care.
- The ability to choose a health professional is important to Lewisham residents. Continuity of care can help health professionals have a better understanding of the individual patient.

- Residents felt it was important to know how to stay healthy to prevent ill health or manage their condition. They want greater access to reliable sources of health information in the local community.
- People with learning disabilities felt that although most GP's are friendly, they don't quite understand how to interact with them. Doctors often used words that were unfamiliar or not easy to understand. The focus group advocated for better communication from services and increased learning disability awareness amongst health professionals.

The full findings and recommendations from our report can be found [here](#).



Advocacy

Our organisation continues to provide the Lewisham Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service. We support residents in helping them make a complaint about local NHS services.

Analysis of our advocacy cases enables us to understand the key issues which are causing people to register an official complaint. We are then able to share our findings and help influence service improvement.

From speaking with clients we recognised the following issues for Lewisham residents during February 2019 to July 2019.

- Repeated appointment cancellations at hospitals
- Early discharge from hospital services
- Waiting times to receive treatment at various health services
- Disagreement with diagnosis
- Lack of communication from GP services
- Quality of treatment at mental health services
- Access to patient records



Feature Case Study

Problem



Ms E suffers from long-standing and chronic medical conditions which require regular monitoring and medication.

In September 2017, she was deregistered from her GP surgery and wasn't sure why. On investigation it appeared that this was due to a situation that had arisen when Ms E had requested her GP write a letter regarding her

condition. She had tried on several occasions to obtain it from reception and her GP. The interactions lead to an altercation with the GP/receptionist and resulted in the police being called and Ms E having to leave the surgery without her letters.

The surgery stated it had a 'zero tolerance' policy and that its staff had both been upset by the incident; Ms E had therefore been deregistered, leaving her in an extremely vulnerable situation regarding her health needs. She had also discovered the GP had written derogatory remarks on her medical records as a result of the incident.

Actions

Ms E's desired outcomes were to remain at the surgery and to have an explanation about her deregistration, an apology from the GP concerned and the remarks removed from her record. A complaint letter was signed off by the client and posted on 27 November 2017.

The client did not receive a final response until 15 February 2018 despite chasing and promises of action. Although the surgery offered a meeting, Ms E decided she had been too upset by the whole episode to face such a meeting and was reluctantly looking for another surgery. Ms E chose to take the complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO).

Outcome

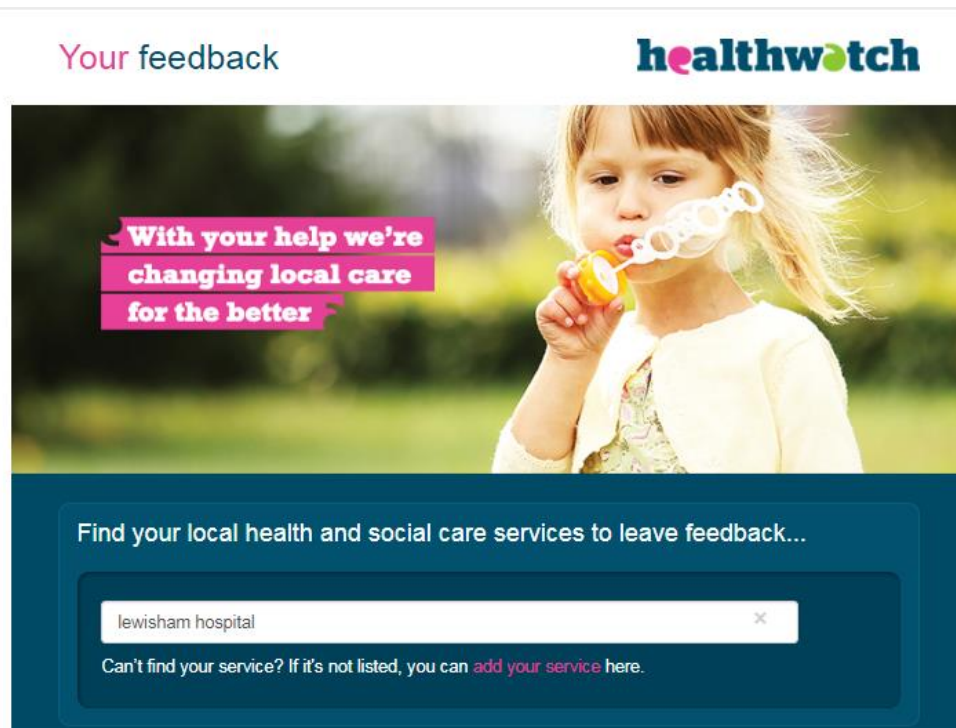
The PHSO upheld Ms E's complaint and contacted the surgery about the removal of the remarks from her medical record. As Ms E is no longer with the surgery, the PHSO is following this up with NHS Primary Care Support England who will be able to instruct the new practice to remove any record. The client was extremely pleased with the news and was very grateful for the advocacy support received.

General Engagement

A key function of Healthwatch Lewisham is to collect people's views and experiences (positive and negative) of health and social care services in the borough. We use this feedback to inform commissioners and providers about the key issues in Lewisham.

We continue to gather experiences through a variety of mediums including emails, local events, meetings, post, phone, social media, our website, outreach and national services. However, the main source of comments we receive is from our hub engagement in the borough. Since 2015, Healthwatch has set up hubs in local community hotspots in order to reach more people. These include GP practices, hospitals, community centres and local festivals.

A central feature of our website is the Feedback Centre which enables people to rate local health and social care services, as well as search for their nearest services. This helps us to generate data that we can understand, benchmark and act on. Our Feedback Centre can be accessed at <https://www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk/services>



To help patients share a detailed account of their patient story, we encourage them to rate, where applicable, different aspects of their experience. They can give feedback on cleanliness, staff attitudes, waiting time, treatment explanation, quality of care and quality of food. These specific themes were chosen as analysis of our data identified them as the most common issues highlighted by users. All comments gathered through our hub engagement are input into the feedback system. The Feedback Centre and our hubs attributed for 95% of all comments.

Analysis of Patient Stories

From the February 1st, 2019 to July 31st 2019, we received **314** comments specifically related to local health and care services. Our organisation also captured the views of over **250** residents about the implementation of the NHS Long Term Plan which has been explored earlier in this report.

From our data, we found that 38% of all patient stories were positive and 30% were negative. 30% of experiences were mixed which represents an increase of 12% when compared to July-September 2018. The rise in the amount of mixed feedback is a continuing trend which has been highlighted in our intelligence reports over the last year.

Residents continue to praise local services for providing a high level of care and treatment but are encountering difficulties accessing services within a preferred timeframe. For example, 81% of comments relating to quality of care/treatment were positive, whilst 71% about appointments were negative.

Patients are struggling to access timely appointments at GP practices, hospitals and mental health services in the borough. Similarly, people are unhappy with the amount of time they are having to wait either to be seen at an appointment, or on a waiting list for treatment. The chart below provides a breakdown of the top 10 themes from the feedback.

Demographics relating to the feedback can be found in the attached appendices.

Themes	Positive	Negative	Mixed
Quality of care/treatment	81%	16%	3%
Appointments	25%	71%	4%
Staff attitudes	77%	23%	0%
Waiting Times	26%	65%	9%
Communication	43%	56%	2%
Referrals	65%	32%	3%
Service co-ordination	78%	22%	0%
Choice	29%	53%	18%
Access to services	50%	42%	8%
Buildings/Facilities	25%	67%	8%
Staff Levels	0%	92%	8%
Support	75%	25%	0%

The highest number of comments we received between February and July 2019 concerned people’s experiences of GP practices and University Hospital Lewisham. 82% of all feedback related to these services. Despite pharmacies, dentists and opticians being accessed regularly by the local population, people are less likely to share their views of their services unless a negative experience prompts them.

Experiences of children and young people’s services (12%) primarily makes up the rest of the collected feedback. We regularly carry out hubs at Kaleidoscope which is a dedicated health centre for children and young people. The engagement provides us with the opportunity to hear the experiences of parents. Kaleidoscope continues to be praised by residents, with the service receiving a combined rating of 4.15 out of 5 stars after being reviewed by 33 people. The service is considered to be extremely co-ordinated and offers a high level of care to children at an “important time in their lives”. The speech and therapy team were singled out for their positive impact, with many parents extremely happy with the progress their children were making since accessing the service.

“The therapist went above and beyond. She did really well working with myself and my son all the way through. She recognised he needed one to one sessions and supported me with the exercises. It's not just a job. She celebrated his achievement with me. A really good connection was developed between me and my son.”

“When my son first started attending speech and therapy at the age of five he could only use hand communication. Now he is a completely different child who communicates confidently.”

It should be noted that not all feedback about Kaleidoscope was positive, with several parents citing long waiting times at the audiology service and the need for slightly improved communication around hearing assessments. Two parents also mentioned having to wait for 18 weeks to access services, which they felt was too long.



Feedback about GP services in Lewisham

From February to July, we gathered 164 reviews about local primary care services. Feedback analysis shows that just under 30% of all comments about Lewisham GP services were positive, which represents a decrease of 8% when compared to data collated between October 2018 and January 2019. 36% were mixed with the remaining 34% being negative. The significant change can be attributed to a greater amount of criticism relating to access to appointments.

Access to appointments remains a recurring and prominent issue across the borough. For example, out of the 87 reviews that discussed booking appointments, 68% criticised the length of time it took to see a doctor. Patients were frustrated about being unable to book routine appointments within a week.

Unless you were making an “emergency” appointment, people were finding themselves having to wait an average of 2 weeks. The majority of negative experiences involved people struggling to make an appointment on the phone. Despite ringing at 8am, residents found the phone lines to be constantly engaged and by the time they were able to speak with a receptionist, all available appointments were usually taken. People tended to find it easier booking online, but it was only useful if you were happy to wait a week.

“You can't get appointment for 2 weeks: asked to call at 8:00 to get an appointment, but by 8:01 no appointments left.” (Rushey Green Group Practice)

However, it should be noted that parents did not tend to face any issues when booking appointments for young children, they found it a simple, straightforward process to get same-day or next day appointments.

Similarly, in terms of ease of access, some patients were supportive of the booking system at GP practices run by the ICO Health Group. This is because they have the option of getting appointments at four different primary care services. Even if their registered surgery did not have any available appointments, there was the possibility of seeing a health professional at one of the alternative services.

However, patients recognised that although the policy does help to reduce the length of waiting times, they were less likely to see a doctor of their choice. As mentioned in previous intelligence reports, continuity of care is incredibly important for Lewisham residents because they have strong and trusting relationships with health professionals. For example, 71% of patients praised the attitudes of nurses and doctors. The majority of service users felt that staff were friendly, professional and approachable. They commended doctors for being extremely thorough and for listening to their issues.

“Dr Tattersfield saved my life! She sent me for a scan straight away. I've recommended her for my parents now. Everyone in the practice is great, especially the doctor who will listen to patients and show empathy for mental health problems too.” (Oakview Family Practice)

Whenever members of the public share experiences of struggling to access their GP service, we inform them about the GP Extended Access Service. (GPEA) Through our hub engagement we still find that a significant number of residents are unaware of the service. For many people, the first time they hear about the GPEA is when receptionists make a referral to the service.

In late July, we carried out three Enter and View visits to the GPEA service to gain further insight about patients' experiences. We were able to gather the views of 30 residents, carers and staff. Initial findings indicate that most service users felt that they received a high level of treatment and advice from either the doctor or nurse. Several patients had booked appointments because they were unsure what was wrong with them, following their consultation they told us that they felt more relaxed and reassured.

Whilst observing the GPEA, we noticed that two patients had been incorrectly given nurse appointments. Further conversations with staff confirmed that patients being referred erroneously is a recurring issue. Considering this, we feel that further guidance needs to be offered to GP receptionists to ensure that the correct referral pathway is followed.

Additionally, more information could be offered to patients by receptionists about the service. Most patients had a limited understanding of the GPEA, with several people thinking it was part of University Hospital Lewisham.

A detailed summary of our GPEA Enter and View report will be included in the next intelligence report.



Despite the negative comments about the comments around appointments, residents continue to be happy with the quality of treatment/service at their GP practices. For example, 78% of all comments relating to quality of treatment were positive. Once residents were able to access to primary care services, they appreciated the advice and treatment explanation given by the doctors and nurses.

Patients also valued being given referrals to community phlebotomy services. South Lewisham Group Practice (SLGP) was praised for a running a co-ordinated service which enabled short waiting times.

During the last six months, 55 reviews were posted about SLGP in our Feedback Centre. The service received a combined rating of 3.9 stars out of 5. Once again, access to routine appointments was highlighted as an issue, because most people were having to wait at least a week. In some cases, patients would visit the practice after being unable to get an appointment to then be advised to try booking online.

Numerous patients do not believe the adoption of online appointments has resolved the issue of availability. They explained that most appointments on the system are at least a week in advance which is not helpful for people who want to see a health professional sooner. Several older residents told us that they found the process of online appointments confusing and would like to receive extra support from the practice.

It's difficult to get appointments for the next day. Online is only useful for appointments that are a week later. I don't appreciate the receptionist asking what my issue is, that is responsibility of the doctor! (South Lewisham Group Practice)

Similarly, to our overall findings about GP practices, 90% of comments relating to the quality of treatment provided by SLGP were positive. The wide range of services available at the practice such as the pharmacy, diabetes clinic, chiropodist and health visitors are valued by Lewisham residents. Patients appreciated doctors collecting them from the waiting area rather than having their names shown on a screen. It was considered to be a **“nice, personal touch.”**



Feedback about University Hospital Lewisham

The majority of comments about secondary care services related to University Hospital Lewisham. 75 patients gave the hospital a combined rating of 3.6 stars out of 5. Data analysis shows a reduction in the amount of positive and negative reviews and a rise in mixed feedback.

The two main positive themes highlighted by service users were quality of treatment/care and staff attitudes. 79% of all comments relating to these themes were positive. These themes form a symbiotic relationship because many people factor in the attitudes of staff when determining the quality of the service. This is a consistent finding which has previously been shared within our intelligence reports.

Patients felt that the cardiology department provided a good level of treatment.

“Best treatment for my heart attack. They were human and so good. As you get older, you don't necessarily expect such good care. They were attentive and made sure I was comfortable throughout the process.” (Cardiology)

However, the cardiology department was also criticised by several patients who had struggled to access the service. For example, two patients had their annual check-up cancelled three times due to staffing issues. This is further evidence that patients encounter a wide variance in service quality when using the hospital.

Several patients raised concerns about staffing levels and described staff as being **“busy” “rushed” and “overwhelmed.”** Patients felt that there is a need for more health professionals to be employed, which would help reduce pressure on the current workforce and improve patient experience.

Doctors and nurses throughout the hospital were commended for their helpfulness in answering patients' questions and concerns. Patients praised staff for being friendly, approachable and understanding of their issues.

“Wonderful service full of reassuring staff. I was informed step by step about my treatment.” (Endocrinology)

Midwives were found to be responsive, caring and extremely supportive. They had created an environment that allowed women to be feel comfortable, relaxed and reassured when giving birth.

“ I experienced problems during my pregnancy, thankfully I had received good information about what could happen. My responsive midwife was amazing, she explained things clearly and answered all my questions.” (Maternity)

Waiting times and communication issues were the common negative themes for patient stories. 67% and 64% of all comments relating to these two themes were unfavourable. Some patients told us that they were disappointed to have not received consistent updates whilst they were waiting for treatment. Whilst others were frustrated about the lack of communication from the hospital in response to delayed appointments and cancellations.

Service users highlighted long waiting times across differing services within University Hospital Lewisham. It should be noted that although we only received a small number of comments about the Accident and Emergency department, a significant percentage involved patients being unsatisfied at having to wait in excess of two hours to be seen by a doctor.

“Quite a long wait, of five and a half hours in total. Frustrating to wait to see someone in the X-rays, then pain relief, then consultation. Would have preferred to have a consultation straight away. Communication could have been better, they didn't know what was happening. more update would be better.” (Accident and Emergency)

Thematic analysis indicates that rather being specific to certain departments, the prominent positive and negative themes continue to encompass a wide range of different wards and departments.

Although it is encouraging to see that 79% of comments mentioning treatment were positive, we must recognise that the number of residents having mixed experiences is increasing. Further focus on reducing waiting times will help improve patient experience.



healthwatch

**It's time to
have your say**

Summary

- Older residents consider pharmacies to be a valuable resource for advice on minor ailments, and subsequently do not visit GP practices as often as before.
- Older residents appreciated receiving reminders about annual check-ups and eligibility for certain treatments such as flu jabs, health checks, screenings etc.
- Older residents felt that the standard length of GP appointments needs to be increased to allow enough time to describe multiple symptoms.
- Young adults felt that stigma around cancer exists within BME communities.
- Because there is a lack of open conversation about cancer within BME communities, there is a false perception that cancer does not exist within the community or that incidences are low.
- Many of the young BME adults are alienated from their families because of their cancer diagnosis. A sizeable number of them have been advised by their family to not receive cancer treatment.
- There is a lack of consistency in the provision of complaints information on GP websites.
- There is a significant variation in how pharmacies and opticians record the communicational needs of patients.
- Our staff and Authorised Representatives were impressed by the service provided at Fieldside Residential Care Home. We found the home to be cosy, pleasantly decorated and extremely clean. It was clear to see that residents were benefitting from a longstanding and caring staff team.
- The Harbour café offers a safe, therapeutic and supportive environment for people who have experienced a mental health crisis.
- Residents felt there needs to be quicker access to mental health support. They suggested that doctors in GPs and hospitals could benefit from mental health training to better support people with their issues.
- Easier and faster access to health professionals, especially in primary care services, was the most popular answer when people were asked what would help them to successfully manage their health and care.
- The ability to choose a health professional as well as continuity of care is important for Lewisham residents.
- People with learning disabilities felt that although most GP's are friendly, they don't quite understand how to interact with them. They feel there is a need for increased learning disability awareness amongst health professionals.
- The speech and therapy team based at Kaleidoscope were singled out for their positive impact, with many parents extremely happy with the progress their children were making since accessing the service.
- A significant number of residents are still unaware about the GP Extended Access Service (GPEA).

- The majority of people who we engaged with during our Enter and View visit to the GPEA service, felt that they received a high level of treatment and advice from the doctors and nurses.
- Despite the negative comments around access to appointments, residents continue to be happy with the quality of treatment/service at their GP practices.
- Staff at University Hospital Lewisham (UHL) were commended for their helpfulness in answering patients' questions and concerns. Patients praised staff for being friendly, approachable and understanding of their issues.
- Midwives at UHL were found to be responsive, caring and extremely supportive. They had created an environment that allowed women to be feel comfortable, relaxed and reassured when giving birth.
- Service users highlighted long waiting times across differing services within UHL.
- Patients continue to encounter a wide variance in service quality when using the hospital. During February to July 2019 there has been a rise in the number of mixed experiences.

Recurring Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to GP appointments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to mental health services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness about the GP Extended Access Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited learning disability awareness amongst health professionals

Recommendations

1. Raising awareness of cancer within BME communities at grass roots level could help challenge stigma related issues such as lack of awareness, late presentation, treatment and screening uptake. The development of community champions would help raise awareness and could encourage people living with cancer to access support earlier.
2. Educating young people at school or engaging with them through outreach in the community would help to raise awareness and tackle stigma around cancer.

3. More data needs to be collected to establish the links between cancer and ethnicity. A better understanding of its impact in BME communities could identify gaps in provision and help shape future engagement.
4. Access to GP appointments continues to be a recurring issue across the borough. We recognise the steps which have been taken locally to tackle this issue. However, our latest intelligence suggests that more work needs to be done to ensure patients can access primary care services when they need them.
5. Provision of additional mental health training for primary care staff could enable quicker diagnosis, referrals and patient outcomes for people with poor mental health.
6. Quicker access to support for people suffering with mental health issues could help prevent the escalation of symptoms. Community support such as group therapies, peer support groups and social prescribing could benefit residents whilst they are waiting to access NHS treatment.
7. Provision of learning disability awareness training to NHS frontline staff would enable better communication and understanding between health professionals and people with learning disabilities. Services should continue to work closely with community organisations such as Lewisham Speaking Up to ensure they understand the issues affecting people with learning disabilities and their needs.
8. Additional work needs to be carried out looking into the implementation of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) across the borough. There is a need for the AIS to be included in disability awareness training for staff within pharmacies and opticians.
9. Older residents valued reminders about annual check-ups and eligibility for certain treatments. They also appreciated call backs from GPs and medication being prescribed over the phone. Therefore, we suggest that these services continue to be provided by primary care services and any examples of good practice should be shared amongst the local network.
10. Further guidance around referrals to the GP Extended Access service should be developed to ensure that the correct referral pathway is followed. Guidance could be included as part of training to support receptionists promote the extended hours service.

Examples of Positive Patient Stories relating to GPs

“They're the best surgery I have ever had. So good with me as a patient. and never fail to treat me and make me feel better.”
(Brockley Road Medical Centre)

“They are flexible with giving appointments. Phone consultations are good - prioritise very well. Quite efficient. Usually really good, don't see a regular GP but they are all up to scratch. Don't have to go there often - but everything is good when I do. Easy to be referred for a blood test.”
(ICO - Moorside Clinic)

“Very impressed with the surgery in regards to the advice and treatment of my gallstones and cancer. The diabetic nurse is also amazing!” **(South Lewisham Group Practice)**

“Appointments are readily available. Same day for child appointments, and my calls are answered promptly. Doctors are very good; they attend to our needs unlike my previous surgery.” **(Lewisham Medical Centre)**

“Been a patient here since 1987, I always waits so that I can be seen by my own GP. I don't mind waiting a couple of weeks for this to happen. My husband is a patient here as well and GP could not be faulted. I use Diabetic Clinic, Blood Tests and Chiropody here. Very happy with all services.” **(South Lewisham Group Practice)**

“A service that does more than just help keep me healthy. Staff helped with my application for a Freedom Pass.”
(Rushey Green Group Practice)

“I have a very lovely Doctor at my surgery. Always a pleasure to see them.” **(Hilly Fields Medical Centre)**

“I have a good chat with my doctor. She understands me and we can have a good laugh. After my last appointment, the medication she provided has helped me feel better.” **(ICO - Moorside Health Clinic)**

“They're great. If you need an appointment you get one. For children you always get an appointment even if they don't have any left they say come at the end of the surgery. My daughter always get an appointment.”
(South Lewisham Group Practice)

“I have diabetes and find my GP incredibly supportive. I take tablets and control my condition with my diet. Practice nurse regularly checks up on me to make sure I'm okay. Constant communication is crucial.”**(Parkview surgery)**

Examples of Negative Patient Stories relating to GPs

Appointments

“My husband is 100% deaf, in a wheelchair with many other health issues. Due to his deafness, he has always booked his appointments online. However, in the last few weeks, every time he goes to make an appointment, only Rushey Green appointments are available. Being in a wheelchair, getting to Catford from Grove Park can be extremely difficult. My husband has been put on Co-codamol for pain relief and is close to running out of the tablets. As this is an acute medication, he is unable to have this medication on his repeat list, so he needs to see a GP - however, he is unable to make an appointment.” **(Novum Health Partnership)**

“Meant to have the best GP practice in the borough according to the CQC. But you ring up in the morning and the phone is always engaged. Then when I got through the practice was closed for staff training. Given an appointment in 3 weeks time, what good is that? **(Amersham Vale Training Practice)**

“Nightmare to get appointment. Can't make an appointment in person at the desk, can only do it by phone. Call at 8 am, can't get them then when do get through as all appointments are gone. Very frustrating. unclear if it's policy or an individual receptionist.” **(Parkview Surgery)**

“Over the last year I've had lots of problems with appointments. Worst wait was over 6 weeks, It feels like I'm being constantly referred to the GP Extended Access Service. Lots of my friends feel the same.” **(Queens Road Partnership)**

“Cannot get an appointment, but I did not want to bother them. 2 weeks minimum wait, I feel like a nuisance.” **(South Lewisham Group Practice)**

Other

“I am a light user of my surgery but have had to contact them often recently. I feel let down by the surgery whose reception staff are sorry to say incompetent when dealing with simple queries and requests.” **(Oakview Family Practice)**

“More doctors have come over as part of the merger but not enough to meet the excess demands. The phlebotomy service needs to be open for more hours every day. Needs to be more like South Lewisham Group Practice. Administration has become more difficult. They lost my son's results and didn't even have any records of the blood testing taking place. The service is clearly stretched.” **(Sydenham Green Group Practice)**

“I was charged £30 for an extremely simple medical report with a 30 day waiting time. I was offered a faster service (10 days) if I was willing to pay £50. So, if i may, the questions I'd like are two: 1. Are thirty days a reasonable waiting time for a self-employed patient in urgent need of a straightforward report for a inguinal hernia operation? 2. Would it not be a lack of ethics for a GP to offer faster service as long as a patient in a vulnerable situation would be willing to pay approximately 67% more?” **(Grove Medical Centre)**

	<p>Made appointment 3 times to see nurse, but didn't get to see her as she wasn't there. Have experienced other patients getting angry in surgery because of this. (Deptford Surgery)</p> <p>“Getting through to this place is a lesson in endurance itself. Simple things like ordering prescriptions or repeats is made difficult by their 'not our fault' attitude. Once you get a prescription done you find it has been amended.” (ICO - Moorside Clinic)</p> <p>“Impossible to get an appointment. Misdiagnosed my daughter for tonsillitis many times. Never able to see the same doctor. I had to self-refer the hospital after symptoms worsened. They don't look after medical records.” (Sydenham Green Group Practice)</p> <p>“Inefficient. Slow at doing anything!” (Hilly Fields Medical Centre)</p>
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Examples of Positive Patient Stories relating to University Hospital Lewisham

	<p>“I used the Oasis Birthing Centre at the hospital. They took really good care of me when I was in labour with my son. Would definitely recommend it to anyone. Great experience.” (Maternity)</p> <p>“Child had bad infection when born. Really well monitored. Saved her life.” (Intensive Care)</p> <p>“Excellent. Came from an ambulance all the way to discharge. Husband in a coma for a few days. Hospital communicated quite well. Ongoing treatment. Lewisham hospital better than Guys Hospital. They liaise well with other departments. They offered support to the family too. Comforting.” (ICU/HDU)</p> <p>“They were pretty good tbh. I was pleased they were able to deal with the bleeding.” (Accident and Emergency)</p> <p>“Quality second to none. Incredibly thorough and explained everything clearly.” (Neurology)</p> <p>“I only have good things to say about the quality of care at this hospital. Yes, getting an appointment is difficult, but apart from that, everything else is good.” (Ear, Nose and Throat)</p> <p>“I was admitted right away and they were efficient. Quality of care was decent. Also, a blood sample was taken and there is good coordination between the departments. (Accident and Emergency)”</p> <p>“Supportive and understanding and has helped in giving me exercises that will reduce tension in my neck and shoulders.” (Physiotherapy)</p> <p>“I took my daughter to do some tests as her blood pressure was high. Everything was perfect, the ward was clean and the quality of care delivered was pretty decent too.” (Maternity)</p>
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Examples of Negative Patient Stories relating to University Hospital Lewisham

“4 months wait for neurology appointment. Rushed staff, but pleasant. Waits are evidently getting longer with everything, department requires more staff.” **(Neurology)**

“My son has been round in circles diagnosing his health problems. Instead of working with departments, everything is dragged out and not communicated face to face. Every new department is made to “start over” explaining everything again.” **(Haematology)**

“Mum took baby to hospital. Told she had a viral infection. Mum not satisfied and asked for second opinion. 2nd doctor also said viral infection. Mum felt they weren't listening to her - baby had high temperature, breathing fast, not taking to her feeds and not as many wet nappies. Took baby home. Called 111 because baby still not well. Took her to Woolwich Hospital because dissatisfied with treatment at Lewisham earlier that day. Woolwich immediately took baby to resus and gave her medication. Baby had bronchitis.” **(Accident and Emergency)**

“ ‘A big baby’ was what the nurse said to me when I complained that a commode couldn't be provided to help me go to the toilet. I am 70 and have been diagnosed with cancer and have two ulcers on my feet which means I find it difficult to walk on my own. I was shocked by her comment, it was undignified and unwarranted.” **(Cancer)**

“3 times went for blood test. They don't know what they are doing. The department made two errors after taking the blood and I had to do it for a third time. First time, the blood was in a wrong tube, the second time my blood wasn't labelled properly so got lost.” **(Haematology)**

“I found it impossible to cancel and rearrange my appointment with the Dermatology Department I have called every single day on the number on the website with no answer, which was the only contact details provided on the website. Eventually I was able to rearrange my appointment but only because I had to contact the patient experience team. I should have been able to re-arrange by contacting the department directly. Hopefully it won't be so difficult if I need to do it in the future.” **(Dermatology)**

“I've had three cancellations for my annual check-up at the cardiology department. This is unacceptable!” **(Cardiology)**

“Went to A & E with my child who had a low temperature. After a long wait of 5 hours, they didn't do anything/give anything. Cold, rude staff.” **(Accident and Emergency)**

Themes

Top themes about GP services	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Appointments	25%	70%	5%
Quality of care/treatment	78%	17%	6%
Staff Attitudes	71%	29%	0%
Waiting Times	24%	68%	8%
Referrals	68%	32%	0%
Communication	50%	50%	0%

Top themes about University Hospital Lewisham	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Quality of care/treatment	79%	21%	0%
Staff Attitudes	79%	21%	0%
Communication	36%	64%	0%
Waiting Times	21%	67%	13%

Demographics

