

HEALTHWATCH LEWISHAM



INTELLIGENCE REPORT
OCTOBER 2018 - JANUARY 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 services 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 services 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 the last three months of engagement.



Signposting Service October - December 2018

With all the changes to health and care services it's not always clear where people should go to report an urgent issue, to make a complaint, or for further information. We provide an information and signposting service for members of the public who live or access health and social care services in the borough.

We cannot give advice or make specific recommendations but we can help people make an informed decision in finding the right health and social care service, whether it is provided by the NHS, the Council or by a voluntary or community organisation. If we are unable to answer an information request using our database of local services, we will endeavour to find a person or organisation who can bring a resolution. People are able to access our service in a variety of ways:

- Contacting the office phone line
- Through our contact form found on our website
- By email
- By social media
- By speaking to one of our team at regular Engagement Hubs

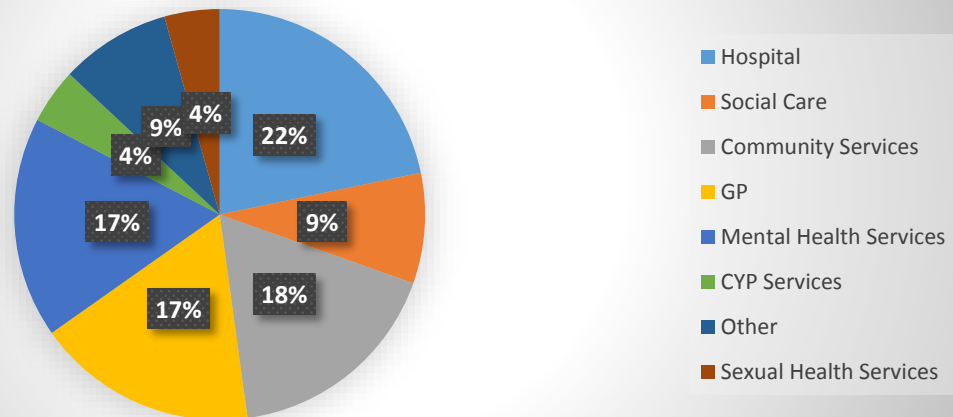
A few examples of the information requests received during the last three months include:

- Booking hospital appointments
- GP registration
- Contraception advice
- Access to Mental Health services
- Diabetes support
- Raising safeguarding concerns with social care services
- Access to Walk-in Centre

Our organisation continues to provide information at workshops we deliver across the borough. For example at our healthy eating workshops and men's mental health peer support groups we make available information about community resources and signpost participants to local services that offer support and advice. We also inform residents at our hubs about local services such as Pharmacy4U and the GP Extended Access Service and have made referrals to SAIL and Community Connections. We recognise that these are valuable services which a significant number of residents are unaware of.

Analysis of the queries shows that nearly 22% related to hospital services in the borough. People were wanting to contact the hospital to either change details related to appointments/medication. We have seen a significant reduction in enquiries relating to GP registration, with only 2 people requiring the contact details for a new GP.

Signposting Enquiry by Service Type



(Fig 1.1)

It is encouraging to see that we have received less queries about people struggling to access services at University Hospital Lewisham. Only one person contacted our service frustrated about the inability to contact a department in the hospital.

Case Study

A concerned mother contacted our service exasperated by her inability to contact the Gastroenterology department at Lewisham Hospital. Her daughter is severely disabled and requires specific medicine to manage her sodium levels. She regularly gets the medication prescribed by her doctor. They were running out of medicine and were in need of a new prescription, however, the doctor was on A/L and the secretary had not actioned the request. The woman was extremely worried because if they didn't get the medicine it would have a negative effect on her daughter's health. Despite trying to organise the prescription for over two weeks nothing has happened and they were down to the last dose of medication. At this point, the mother rang us for help because she didn't know what else to do and had run out of options.

Our Response

We signposted the mother to the PALS service at University Hospital Lewisham. She was unable to make contact so we called and explained the urgency of the situation and the need for them to contact the mother and resolve the issue.

Outcome

Within 5 hours, the daughter had been issued a new prescription and it was picked up by the mother.

During this quarter, we saw a rise in the number of queries about mental health issues with South London and Maudsley (SLaM) services. A resident contacted our signposting service on behalf of their wife who is trying to access IAPT and had her initial assessment. She was then directed to crisis support. However, what she needs is ongoing support with her depression. Since the assessment, they have been transferred back and forth from IAPT to Crisis support and felt like they were getting nowhere.

Furthermore, a local resident felt that SLaM needed to be more accessible for people who do not speak English as their first language. He was Polish and wanted to speak about his concerns in his first language, because he felt that sometimes the subtlety of his feelings can be lost in translation. He would like to see doctors where he feels comfortable to express himself and be fully understood.

We continue to signpost residents who want to make complaints either to the Lewisham Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy Service or other relevant services.

A patient was unhappy with the Lewisham Medical Centre. She was frustrated at the lack of appointments available outside of working hours. But her main issue was with the attitudes of staff at the practice, she finds her GP to be rude and dismissive.

Another resident contacted our signposting service wanting to make a complaint about University Hospital Lewisham and how she believes a mistake had been made with her corrective nose surgery.

Thematic analysis shows that our service continues to predominantly support Lewisham residents to access a variety of different health services, as well as offer relevant information around making complaints.

Your story has the power to
make change happen.
Share your experience of
local care with us
#ItStartsWithYou



Targeted Engagement

Feedback from Cancer Service Users

We engaged with people who have experiences of cancer services at Rushey Green Time Bank and Macmillan Cancer Research's drop-in coffee morning. Residents provided mixed feedback about local cancer services.

Some patients experienced great care from the start to the end of their treatment. Those who had positive experiences highlighted the importance of clear and concise information explaining what patients can expect. They were appreciative of detailed step by step information relating to their care pathway.

Furthermore, the information about and provision of appropriate medication such as anti-sickness medicine was praised. Patients who experienced good care also mentioned access to support from services including NHS and third sector services. Early signposting to services such as cancer specialist units, was valued as it gave them access to further support and information. Family support was considered essential in the majority of the patients' cancer journey. The continued backing from loved ones helps people not feel alone when tackling their diagnosis.

Feedback showed that people are not always aware of the services that Macmillan Cancer Research provide. Patients said that when they were newly diagnosed they would have appreciated simplified information about local organisations who offer help and support. Books and guides produced by Macmillan exploring different issues were considered useful resources.

Macmillan support staff were mentioned as extremely caring to cancer patients. 'Whenever I need someone, they're there.' However, not all patients had a similar experience with some left without any support or weren't signposted to support at the point of diagnosis. Some patients mentioned not being informed about anti-sickness medicine or about the side effects of the treatment.

People underlined the link between their cancer diagnosis and mental health. 'It's a vicious circle' said one patient. Access to activities and volunteering were cited as being mentally and physically beneficial in the patients' recovery. Activities offered by Lewisham Time Bank were praised. One patient has been very involved with the organisation and leads their knitting activity workshop. 'Craft groups keeps me going. There was no one to turn to when I was diagnosed'.

One person felt there was very little communication between services and hospitals. A hospital had contacted the patient directly to find out what treatment was being provided by another hospital. They described their experience as being draining. 'The hospitals should be talking to one another'. 'It's a full-time job being ill made worse when I end up having to do the job of the professionals and chasing them up'.

However, not all feedback relating to hospitals was negative. A nurse at University Hospital Lewisham was singled out for being kind and caring. Furthermore, the

Cancer Centre based at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Queen Mary Hospital were commended by patients for 'Delivering a platinum service'.

A couple of cancer patients were unhappy with their experience of the Lewisham Enablement service. One person was considered ineligible for housing adjustments as staff considered their home was in a good condition. She was unhappy that a decision had been made based on the appearance of her home and felt her opinion had not been taken fully into account. Another resident had had a bath board fitted, however, she did not have enough strength to use it, and therefore the adjustment was useless as her issue still remained.

The feedback about local cancer services highlights the need for all patients to receive detailed information about their care pathway. For peoples' experiences seemed to differ significantly depending on how much access they had to relevant resources. Further awareness of community services would allow residents to have more information and support available to them.



COPD

During the quarter, we engaged with 10 members of a Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Peer Support Group.

The majority of the group participants had attended the Lung, Exercise and Education Programme (LEEP) course and agreed that they are extremely valuable in helping patients to better understand and manage their condition. The course was recognised as providing useful additional information relating to further support opportunities. For example, one member found about the peer support group through because of their attendance at a LEEP course. Another patient praised physio facilities and said having this service means she feels safe and supported as opposed to exercising in a gym alone unsure whether she is performing the exercises correctly.

However, it became apparent that there is a disparity in the information being offered by GPs at the initial point of diagnosis and afterwards. One patient who is registered at the Jenner practice said she did not know about LEEP and was never informed about it. She was only signposted to the service because of her own initiative after asking the doctor if she could access further support for her condition. Furthermore, not all group members had been offered medicine and COPD reviews.

Most issues that the group participants expressed were in relation to their acute health issues. Many complained about not being able to book an appointment when they were unwell. The appointment booking systems varied between surgeries that participants used. One patient reported she can always get an appointment but in order to obtain it she must physically attend the surgery early in the morning. Other members relied on the telephone service because they were not always physically able to attend the surgery or did not have this option.

Patients mentioned that they felt some of the antibiotics that they are prescribed are not effective yet are the only medication available on prescription. They were concerned that they could not access their GP to explain their issues with the antibiotics.

One elderly patient recently experienced an acute chest infection for which he was prescribed antibiotics. When the first course did not have any effect, he was prescribed another course without any further checks. When the patient returned to his GP for the third time a COPD nurse was asked to examine the patient. Following the tests, the patients was taken to the Accident and Emergency Department. He was then referred to his GP to obtain a referral to a chest clinic. The patient felt that his condition should have been monitored more closely and tested sooner. He believes that these steps would have prevented his emergency admission.

The chest clinic at University Hospital Lewisham (UHL) was praised for providing a good quality of service. However, it was mentioned that Guys and St Thomas have dedicated clinics and wards which patients valued. The patients told us they would prefer similar services to be available closer to home.

Despite the group being happy with services provided by UHL, they were extremely concerned about the constant smoking outside the main entrance of the hospital. Most felt it was unacceptable, and needed to be policed better by the hospital, especially as it is meant to be a non-smoking area. Patients have had to resort to holding their breath to avoid inhaling the cigarette fumes.

Issues with medicine management was raised by the group. They highlighted the dangers of being prescribed a medicine that could have negative effects when taken with other drugs. A patient had to refuse medication prescribed by a locum doctor because she understood that it was unsuitable. She was contacted later by her regular doctor that who explained that the patient made the right decision as it would have had a negative impact on her health. She was offered an alternative treatment. A resident registered at the Jenner Practice received a GP consultation over the phone. The patient did not feel confident with the diagnosis and went to the pharmacist instead who she felt advised a better medication.

Several patients reported they didn't use certain medication prescribed for example inhalers, as they did not feel **'it does anything'**. Other members also reported feeling unwell after using inhalers.

One gentleman said he does not take any medication as he feels he can manage the condition by himself (by slowing down or resting when he feels out of breath). A few people admitted to not using aids such as an oxygen machine (breathing support machine at night) and challenge themselves to cope without it.

The COPD support group stressed the need to be able to access GP appointments immediately when they become unwell. Being able to see the same doctor is incredibly important because their familiarity and knowledge regarding the patient's medical history can prevent medication being incorrectly prescribed. Regular reviews can also help avoid emergency admissions. All referrals to the LEEP programme were praised by patients and all residents with COPD should be further encouraged to participate.



Access to services for seldom heard groups

Hearing the views of seldom heard groups in Lewisham continues to be a priority for our organisation. We recently delivered a workshop for an ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) class at the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA).

The information session covered topics of self-care, the role of pharmacies in treating minor illnesses, access to primary care, sexual health, mental health, 111, and emergency services. We learnt that the majority of participants were unaware of the different services available, only mentioning GPs and A&E as means of accessing help with their health. Furthermore, none of the group knew about the available translation services in the borough. But were extremely positive upon finding out that both the 111 and 999 service provide translators.

Participants shared similar experiences of being unable to book appointments at their local GP practices. Several residents found it exceedingly difficult to get appointments at Deptford Surgery and Lewisham Medical Centre. None of the group were familiar with the GP Extended Access Service and how they could access the service.

It is apparent that this seldom heard community do not have a strong awareness of the different local health services in the borough. We recommend that the CCG adapts their promotional materials for the “Use the Right Service” campaign to include other languages.



CYP Mental Health

From October 2018 to January 2019, we carried out a project which look at the experiences of children and young people (CYP) in relation to mental health. Our work aimed to capture the views of CYP on their mental health needs and services available to them and identify where any gaps may fall. We gathered the feedback of 507 young people.

Part of our engagement focused on understanding CYP's experiences of local mental health services. Compass a service which offers support to CYP in Lewisham needing help or advice with emotional wellbeing, sexual health or substance misuse was praised for the quality of its service. Kooth also received high satisfaction rate amongst the young people who had accessed the online counselling service.

CYP highlighted the importance of being listened to when using a service, praising services that 'listen well', did not change the topic and allowed them to let out their feelings. Staff who were 'nice', 'helpful' and respectful were noted at all services, including Place2Be, and valued for their support.



Respondents were grateful to services for support overcoming problems such as panic attacks, negativity and anger issues. One respondent was thankful to have a place to relieve 'all the pressure'.

However, long waiting times and issues of access were amongst problems highlighted by CYP. Respondents were critical of long waiting times at CAMHS, stating 'the wait for CAMHS is too long' and that the 'waiting list is 18 months long'. Whilst some respondents praised the accessibility of services at schools, where they could 'drop in at any time', others felt that counsellors were not always available when needed. Being put on hold for a long time or not answering was also an issue for one respondent who contacted Childline.

As it stands, participants felt that the services available to under 18s in Lewisham seeking urgent mental health support is inadequate. Participants felt that their only option if they needed immediate support would be to go to University Hospital Lewisham.

Privacy and confidentiality were also particularly important to respondents. Services were criticized for breaking confidentiality and not having enough privacy, whereas others were praised for valuing CYP's privacy and noted as trustworthy.



CYP also highlighted the need for a varied service and options when seeking support with their mental health. Some criticisms of services included advice feeling ‘repetitive and predictable’. They also mentioned feeling uncomfortable discussing some particular topics and feelings of awkwardness. Others felt that the support they had received had not helped or made a

significant difference. Some respondents felt uncomfortable discussing problems in the school environment and stated there is not enough privacy.

Finally, continuity in support was important to CYP. Whilst some respondents felt they had overcome their problems, some felt as though they still struggled. Some CYP felt that they were not able to cover all problems they wanted to discuss when they had used services. One CYP described a service as ‘more of a place to go with a friend and speak about problems and not how to deal with mental health’, indicating that they would benefit from learning self-help tools to use long-term in daily life.

Our full findings and recommendations can be found in our Making Sense of Mental Health 2018 report which will be released in March 2019.



Diabetes Community Support



Community Waves set up four peer support groups in the London Borough of Lewisham, during 2018, with the intention of people with or at risk of Type 2 diabetes supporting one another with diet, exercise and knowledge.

The facilitators arranged a wide range of speakers, this includes a diabetic eye nurse who spoke about the importance of diabetics having regular eye checks, local healthy walk leaders who went over exercise and invited participants to local walking groups, nutritionists who spoke about healthy eating and a speaker who talked about mental wellbeing.

Members of the peer support groups provided very positive feedback about the groups. **“I find it very encouraging - just to be able to chat with others in similar situations to myself.”** The variety of information provided about Type 2 diabetes was praised. One participant didn't realise how important it was to have regular foot checks and thanks to her group, she made the effort to make an appointment with the GP to arrange one. Several people cited the groups as a key reason for them losing weight due to education around healthy eating.

The groups were an opportunity for people to share their experiences of local services. Residents felt that they struggled to manage their condition because they received little support after their diagnosis. They did not believe a yearly check-up was an effective mechanism, they want further opportunities to ask questions and receive advice.

The length of time in between meetings was considered too long by most people who attended the groups. They suggested that they would prefer monthly support groups. From the findings of the project, it is evident that there is a need and demand for community diabetes services in the borough.

CASE STUDY

Nicola is a Type 2 diabetic who initially joined the Lewisham Central group, but felt it was so helpful, that she made the effort to go along to some of the other groups. Nicola has a learning disability and her facilitator found an easy read guide about Type 2 diabetes which she presented to Nicola to further help her understanding of the condition. Nicola was originally a huge fan of fast food, but thanks to the help and support of her group, she has cut down considerably on such foods and has even lost weight. Nicola's facilitator said; "It made it all worthwhile the day that Nicola texted me to say that she had had a salad for lunch instead of her usual KFC. That was a huge turning point for her and made me realise how important the group is for people who require help and support around Type 2 diabetes."

If there is a lack of community services, it is likely that people like Nicola would fall back into their old, unhealthy ways. Many participants have pointed out that having the support and help from people in similar situations to themselves makes all the difference and keeps them motivated to look after their health, exercise and eat healthily. There appears to be a gap in first level diabetes support in Lewisham for individuals post diagnosis and once structured education schemes have been completed.



Children's services

Hearing the experiences of children and young people remains a priority for our organisation.

Aside from targeted engagement, we carry out regular hubs at Kaleidoscope. Kaleidoscope is a dedicated health centre for children and young people in Lewisham. Doctors and nurses were praised for their friendly nature and ability to understand patients' needs. The majority of residents found the service to be accessible. "Quick access to a professional service" Kaleidoscope was recognised as being a highly efficient service which provided a strong network of support.

We regularly visit Children and Family's centres (CFC) across the borough as part of our hub programme. Parents regularly tell us that they find the CFCs to be a fantastic service providing vital support and information.

A hub was carried out at the Bellingham Children's Centre where we were able to speak with parents who were using the baby hub service.

Most mothers we spoke to had been signposted to the Bellingham baby hub after conversations with health visitors. They were extremely grateful for the referral and advice given to them. "Privileged to live in a borough that has lots of options for mums who stay at home with under 3's."

The women recognised the staff as being extremely helpful and friendly which made them feel supported. "Staff have brilliant knowledge and are reassuring and never make me feel stupid for questions." Several mothers cited the reception staff as possessing strong communications skills which made registration easier. They were also happy with the amount of relevant literature available at the Centre. Parents mentioned they would like to receive email updates about upcoming activities and new services available.

Bellingham Children's Centre was praised for having a wide range of services available including the health visitors and baby weighing. The toy area was singled out as being an ideal outlet for babies and children. "Invaluable for mums" One mother was exceedingly happy with the service but felt there needed to be a baby changing facility available.

Staff consider the service to be very good with a wide range of vital services. One suggested improvement was for the centre to invest in better IT and computers.

A woman who suffers from anxiety considers Bellingham to be the best children centre in the borough. She felt the centre has an extremely calm atmosphere, unlike the service provided at Rushey Green Group Practice which makes her feel rushed.

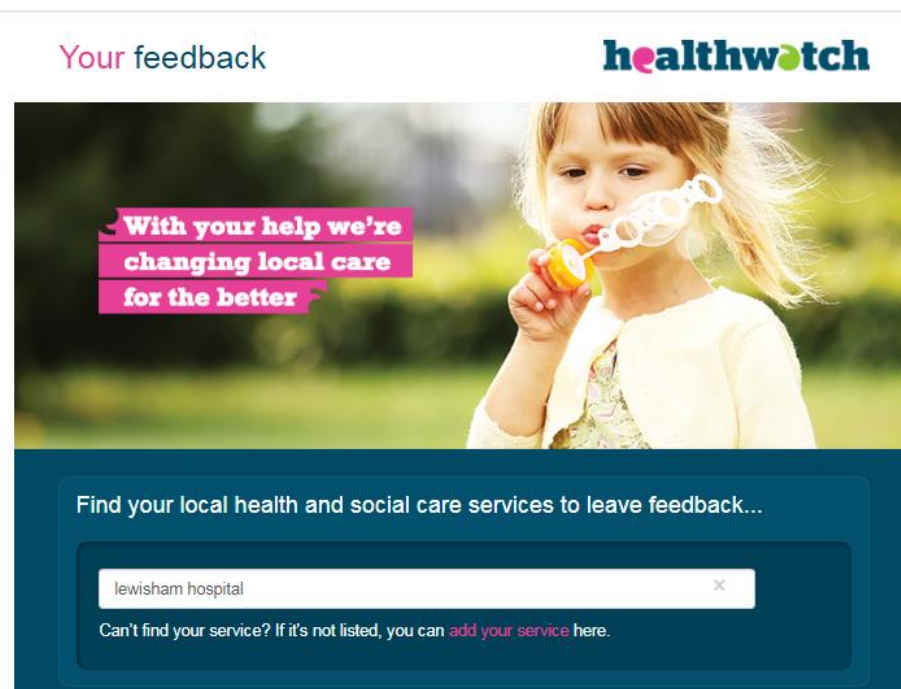
Analysis of the feedback clearly shows that the Bellingham Children's Centre is an extremely valued community service that offers parents the support they need.

General Feedback

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.

Last year we developed an online Feedback Centre which is accessed through our website and will help residents share their experience of health and social care services. This helps us to generate data that we can understand, benchmark and act on. Our Feedback Centre can be accessed at www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk.



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 the majority of all comments.

Analysis of Patient Stories

The highest number of comments we received during October to January concerned people's experiences of GP Practices and University Hospital Lewisham. 78% of all feedback related to these particular services. This remains a consistent finding since we began our intelligence reports. Despite pharmacies and dentists being accessed regularly by the population, people are less likely to share their views of the services unless they have a negative experience.

Experiences of children and young people's services primarily makes up the rest of the collected feedback. Comments about these services have been explored earlier in this report.

Feedback about GP Services in Lewisham

Feedback analysis shows that just under 38% of all comments about GP services were positive, which represents a decrease of 12% when compared to Q2 data. 34% of experiences were mixed and 27% negative. The drop in positive comments can be accredited to a greater amount of negative patient stories relating to access to appointments.

Access to appointments remains a recurring and prominent issue across the borough. For example, 60% of comments relating to appointments were negative. Patients remain frustrated at their inability to book routine appointments within one or two days. They mentioned that unless they required an urgent appointment it could take weeks, in several cases up to a month to be seen by a GP. Despite by contacting their practices at 8am, people could spend in excess of 30 minutes waiting on hold to then be informed that there were no longer any appointments available.

“Can't get an appointment for weeks. My situation could be much worse by then. Why is it only open twice a week?”

(Downham Family Medical Practice)

People also encountered this problem when booking an appointment directly at their practice. Two patients were unhappy that the Rushey Green Group Practice has changed its procedures and it is not possible to book an appointment between 8am and 8.30am by walking into the surgery. They explained that you are unable to get same day appointments if you visit reception later. The patients feel that this policy is encouraging the use of the online appointment system, but not everyone feels comfortable or has the computer literacy to navigate the system.

During a hub at Sydenham Green Group practice, patients raised their frustration at long waiting times.

“Waiting times are poor when at the surgery. It's acceptable for doctors to be running late. But if you are late you are told to go, which seems unfair.”

Some patients explained they wouldn't mind waiting a little longer for an appointment if they could guarantee seeing their chosen doctor. Continuity of care helps build communication and trust between the doctor and patient.

Working adults feel that the current GP appointment system is not suitable for them. They feel that more flexible appointment times need to be available.

“It is near impossible to get to appointment if you are a working adult. Had to ring 15 times, only to have appointments available between 9 to 5 which is not good for people that work on shifts.

(South Lewisham Group Practice)

Whenever members of the public share experiences of struggling to access GP appointments, we inform them about the GP Extended Access Service. Through our hub engagement, we still find that a significant number of residents are unaware of the service. From talking with patients, it is evident that receptionists are not regularly signposting to the GPEA service. Training front-line staff to promote the extended hours service would help to raise awareness.

Numerous patients have highlighted that currently in order to access the GP Extended Access service (GPEA), you must be referred by your GP practice. However, if you can't get through to your GP in the first place (because phone lines are busy), you then can't access the extended hours service. To resolve this issue, patients should be able to book appointments directly through the GPEA website.

Our advocacy service which support clients to make NHS complaints, found that there were discrepancies in the quality of complaints information on local GP websites. Many clients who were not familiar with the complaints process struggled to find appropriate information, for example the details which need to be included in a written complaint. Following their findings, we are currently carrying out a review of the complaint information provided on GP websites. We believe that the provision of clear and concise information makes it easier for patients to understand how to raise their concerns, leave feedback and follow the correct NHS complaints procedure.

A resident approached us concerned about the merger between the Baring Road Medical Practice and the Rushey Green Group Practice. They explained that since the merger their husband has struggled to book suitable 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.”

Despite the negative comments around appointments, residents generally continue to be happy with the quality of treatment/service at their GP practices. The patient stories show that GPs continue to provide a good level of advice, reassurance and treatment explanation.

“Due to family bereavement I have needed to support a family member with their multiple healthcare needs. These have been complicated by their non-compliance for several months. I have needed to call on the help, advice and services of the various members of the staff and doctors without whom I would have had a difficult task made all the more complicated.”

(Bellingham Green Surgery)

84% of comments praised the attitudes of nurses and doctors. The majority of service users felt that staff were professional, calm, friendly and knowledgeable. They commended doctors for listening and understanding their issues rather than communicating behind a computer screen. It is evident that doctors and nurses have built a good rapport with their patients. Staff at South Lewisham Group Practice were singled out by residents for their empathy and courtesy.

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.

it starts with **YOU**

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Feedback about University Hospital Lewisham

The majority of comments about secondary care services related to University Hospital Lewisham. 44% of all feedback collected was positive, with 33% being negative and 22% mixed. Analysis shows that patients continue to encounter a wide variance in service quality when using the hospital.

The two main positive themes highlighted by service users were quality of treatment/care and staff attitudes. As mentioned in previous intelligence reports, this is an expected pattern because for many users these two issues are intertwined, and many equate staff attitudes with the quality of service they receive.

“I attended the hospital to receive my colonoscopy results. I saw my consultant and she was very delightful lady, she told me to expect all that's happened so far and what I need to do from now on. I'm very happy at service and she was too lovely, and she put me at ease so I could ask any questions.”

(Gastroenterology)

Doctors and nurses throughout the hospital were commended for their helpfulness in answering patients' questions and concerns. Staff created an environment which allowed service users to feel comfortable and reassured. The Radiology department was singled out for being exceedingly efficient and consisting of a **“fantastic team.”**

We received less negative feedback about communication issues during the last four months. However, one resident was unhappy with the lack of communication on Larch Ward.

“I was discharged a week ago and asked to return to Larch Ward on Saturday afternoon for a pre-surgical procedure and the surgery was lined up for the following day. Upon arrival no one was aware I had surgery scheduled, but after consultation, I was admitted, put on nil by mouth and bowel prep commenced. At 10 am on Sunday morning a different doctor came and informed me the surgery would not be going ahead and she discharged me to go home and a new date would follow in 6 weeks.”

Waiting times remains the most common negative theme for patient stories, however, similarly to communication, we have received less comments compared to previous intelligence reports. A couple of residents mentioned their frustration with long waiting times in the Accident and Emergency Department. But this marks a significant reduction in the last four months.

Thematic analysis indicates that rather than being specific to certain departments, the prominent positive and negative themes we gathered through our general engagement covered numerous departments in UHL. It is encouraging to see that despite patient's mixed experiences of the hospital, that 83% of the comments mentioning treatment were positive.

Summary

- The Healthwatch Lewisham Signposting Service continues to predominantly support Lewisham residents to access a variety of different health services, as well as offer relevant information around making complaints.
- Feedback about local cancer services highlights the need for all patients to receive detailed information about their care pathway. Further awareness of community services would allow residents to have more information and support available to them.
- Seldom heard communities are not necessarily familiar with key self-care messages including the “Use the Right Service” campaign.
- Members of a COPD support group stressed the need to be able to access GP appointments immediately when they become unwell. Being able to see the same doctor is incredibly important because their familiarity and knowledge regarding the patient’s medical history can prevent medication being incorrectly prescribed. Regular reviews can also help avoid emergency admissions.
- All referrals to the Lung, Exercise and Education programme were praised by COPD patients.
- Compass and Kooth both received high satisfaction scores by young people who had accessed the health and wellbeing services.
- The waiting time to access the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service remains excessive.
- Young people feel that their only option if they needed immediate mental health support would be to attend University Hospital Lewisham.
- Bellingham Children’s Centre was singled out for its wide variety of high-quality services and is extremely valued by parents.
- There appears to be a gap in community diabetes support in Lewisham for individuals post diagnosis and upon the completion of structured education schemes.
- Access to appointments remains a recurring and prominent issue across the borough. A significant number of residents are still unaware about the GP Extended Access Service.
- Despite the negative comments around appointments, residents generally continue to be happy with the quality of treatment/service at their GP practices.
- Patients continue to encounter a wide variance in service quality when using the hospital.
- Staff at University Hospital Lewisham the hospital were commended for their helpfulness in answering patients’ questions and concerns. Staff created an environment which allowed service users to feel comfortable and reassured.
- There has been a noticeable reduction in negative feedback about communication and waiting times in the Accident and Emergency Department.

Recurring Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to GP appointments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seldom heard communities lack of awareness about self-care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long waiting times to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Recommendations

- Training front-line staff in GP practices to promote the extended hours service would help to raise awareness and tackle the issue of access to appointments.
- Enabling access to GPEA appointments through an online booking system.
- Development of community support groups to help residents with Type 2 diabetes manage their condition.
- Adapt promotional materials for the “Use the Right Service” campaign and other self-care resources to include other languages.
- Ensuring that residents with COPD are prioritised in the allocation of GP appointments.
- Development of a signposting booklet for local cancer services to help increase access to support and advice for patients.
- In Lewisham’s Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being Strategy, a commitment to meeting waiting time standards for CAMHS has been made. We agree that this commitment must be met as a priority.

Appendix

Examples of Positive Patient Stories relating to GPs

“I was pleasantly surprised when I managed to book an emergency appointment for my 7-year-old son by calling the surgery in the morning. The pleasant receptionist was accommodating and booked us for an appointment after my son's school which meant he didn't miss out on his learning and I didn't have to book annual leave. We saw a doctor who went above and beyond to try to work out the root of my son's issue. She also tried to find how could she help without necessarily giving out medicine which I totally support. She did not give up until she worked out what could be the cause of the problem. As a result, I now have an action plan to follow, to hopefully prevent the issue from recurring. Fingers crossed it will work. Regardless, this is the attitude I would love to see more from all the GPs. I was utterly surprised and respected the GPs approach and attitude.” **(Honor Oak Group Practice)**

“At the end of September, I was able to visit Sydenham Green Group Practice who offered 500 flu jab appointments on the Saturday. it was a very efficient process and I didn't need to wait long.”
(Sydenham Green Group Practice)

“I have been coming here for 30 years and have no cause for complaint. Doctors and staff are wonderful. I get urgent appointments very easily, although not with the doctor of my choice. Communication is excellent and I always book my appointments in advance.”
(South Lewisham Group Practice)

“Very good. Easier to get appointments and they text you to remind you of your appointment.”
(Oakview Family Practice)

“I have no complaints. They listen to me and referred me when I was worried about my blood pressure being really high. They managed to reassure me. Dr Ismail is a very good doctor.”
(South Lewisham Group Practice)

“Very knowledgeable and helpful about why the medication is needed and what the outcomes of the medication will be.”
(Honor Oak Group Practice)

“My experience at the Vale was very smooth, my appointment was very quick, but I had enough time to say what I wanted. I never felt rushed.”
(Vale Medical Centre)

“I was able to book my appointment in one day, which I was very pleased about. Prescriptions go electronically to my pharmacy, which is another positive thing.” **(South Lewisham Group Practice)**

“Staff are polite and able to remain calm. My test has been cancelled and I did not check my phone. The receptionist checked my mobile number and realised that my contact details were out of date. Rebooked another appointment easily.” **(Rushey Green Group Practice)**

Examples of Negative Patient Stories relating to GPs

Appointments

“It is increasingly difficult to get an appointment. I would ring up at 8, end up 16th in queue, however, I would have to be on the phone for an hour, for it then to hang up.” (Hilly Fields Medical Centre)

“Can usually get an appointment but the problem with the NHS is that I have numerous issues but have limited time. Lots of issues are connected so they need to be heard. I get told by doctors why didn't you raise that issue at your appointment, and I tell them that I didn't have time.” (Amersham Vale Practice)

“Sometimes difficult to get an appointment to suit working schedule. Overall experience is positive. Seems a bit outdated with phone system to book appointments which can be slow.” (Sydenham Green Group Practice)

“I wanted to get an appointment to be prescribed certain medication but couldn't get one at Baring Road so had to go to Rushey Green. The bus got stuck in traffic, so I was 15 minutes late despite giving myself 45 minutes to get there. I rang them to tell them I was running late and when I got there, they wouldn't see me. When I said to the receptionist that I had rang, she said “well it wasn't me that you spoke to.” After complaining, I was able to be booked in for an extended hours appointment at the hospital.” (Novum Health Partnership)

“It is hard to get an appointment as phone lines are down. Receptionist and doctors are ok. Communication with doctors is good but I would prefer to see a regular GP. The waiting time is bad, and they should be more precise about the appointment time.” (South Lewisham Group Practice)

“Can wait 3-4 weeks to get an appointment which is very unsatisfactory. This has been an issue for a couple of years.” (Sydenham Green Group Practice)

Other

“The doctors don't listen to my complaints. It's not until you are in serious agony that you are taken seriously.” (Rushey Green Group Practice)

“I became seriously ill and felt that the GP was just guessing what was wrong. I ended up going to A&E at Kings.” (Grove Medical Centre)

“I was frustrated that the practice refused to give my 4-year-old son a nasal flu spray. They said it was only available for 2 and 3 year olds even though he is not in school. I checked and saw that he was eligible on the NHS website. Finally, after speaking to the practice again they agreed to give him the spray. I felt that they should have known he was eligible in the first place.” (Torrison Road Medical Practice)

Resident was diagnosed with tinnitus, encouraged her to use anti-depressants and was given a prescription. But they didn't want to take them due to the side effects. So it will be on their medical records but that will be wrong. (Hilly Fields Medical Centre)

“GP only gives pills. They do not refer you to a specialist. I would like to see diabetes specialist. I would like a kit to test blood sugar, but not available. There is no access to the service.”
(Triangle Group Practice)

Top themes about University Hospital Lewisham	Positive	Negative
Staff attitudes	75%	25%
Quality of Care/Treatment	83.33%	16.66%
Waiting Times	33.33%	66.60%
Communication	45.45%	54.54%

Top themes about GP Services	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Appointments	37.20%	60.46%	2.32%
Staff Attitudes	83.87%	16.21%	
Quality of Care/Treatment	89.47%	10.52%	
Waiting Times	36.36%	54.54%	9.09%