

# LAS Strategy

## Feedback from engagement activities

Healthwatch Lewisham  
January 2023



# Contents

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Activities undertaken                | 3  |
| Overall Experience with LAS Services | 4  |
| Demographics                         | 6  |
| Feedback from Service Users          | 9  |
| Summary of findings                  | 11 |
| Finding 1                            | 12 |
| Finding 2                            | 13 |
| Finding 3                            | 15 |
| Finding 4                            | 16 |
| Finding 5                            | 17 |
| Additional considerations            | 18 |

# Activities undertaken

## Survey

Healthwatch Lewisham developed a survey with five other local Healthwatch organisations run by Your Voice in Health and Social Care (YVHSC). The survey covered 3 main elements: 999, 111 and working with partners. Our questions very closely align to what was outlined by LAS in the project brief provided to Healthwatch.

Our survey was posted online in December distributed via available email networks across the Healthwatch staff team and supported by local newsletters, Facebook posts and Twitter activity, including paid for adverts.

## Discharge Lounge visit

Healthwatch Lewisham visited the Discharge Lounge at University Hospital Lewisham on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January. The officers who visited the Lounge used paper copies of the online survey to collect feedback from patients about their experience with LAS while they were waiting for their transport in the Lounge.

A variety of in-depth opinions and answers were given and a solid oversight of the public's feedback of the LAS services in the London Borough of Lewisham has been formed.

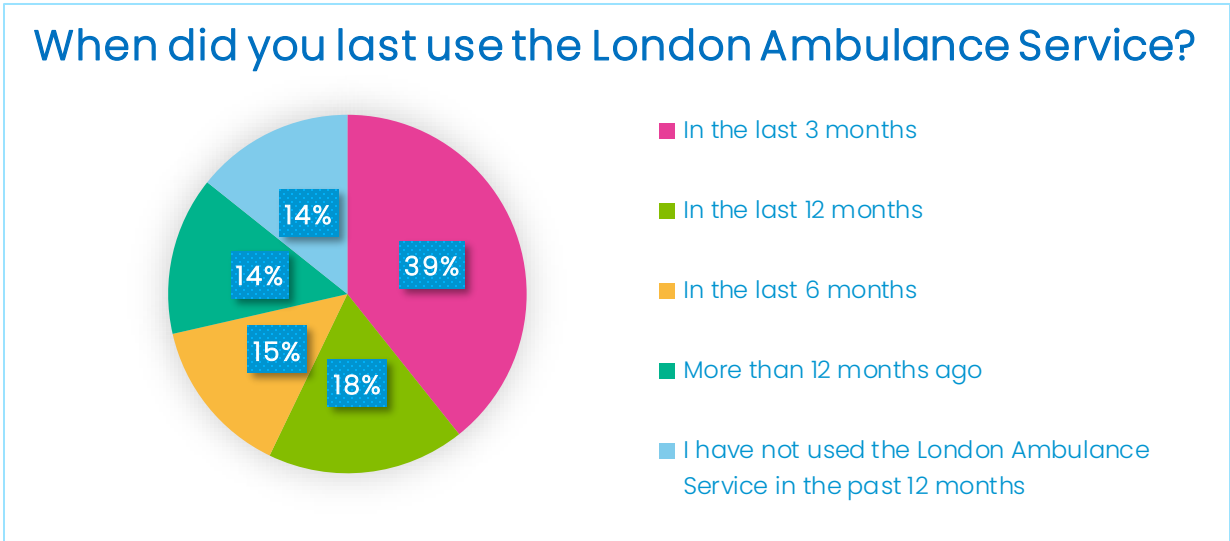
In total, we collected 15 completed survey which was added to the online survey.

## Carers Forum Visit

A Carers Forum took place on 17<sup>th</sup> January at the Carers Hub to discuss action to be taken for carers. The officers who attended gave a summary of the survey, alongside prompts of LAS working with other parts of health care and how they can positively contribute to the community. Paper copies of the survey were distributed to the attendees of our Carers Forum and assistance was given to anyone that required it.

We collected 5 detailed completed surveys which was added to the online survey.

# Overall Experience with LAS Services

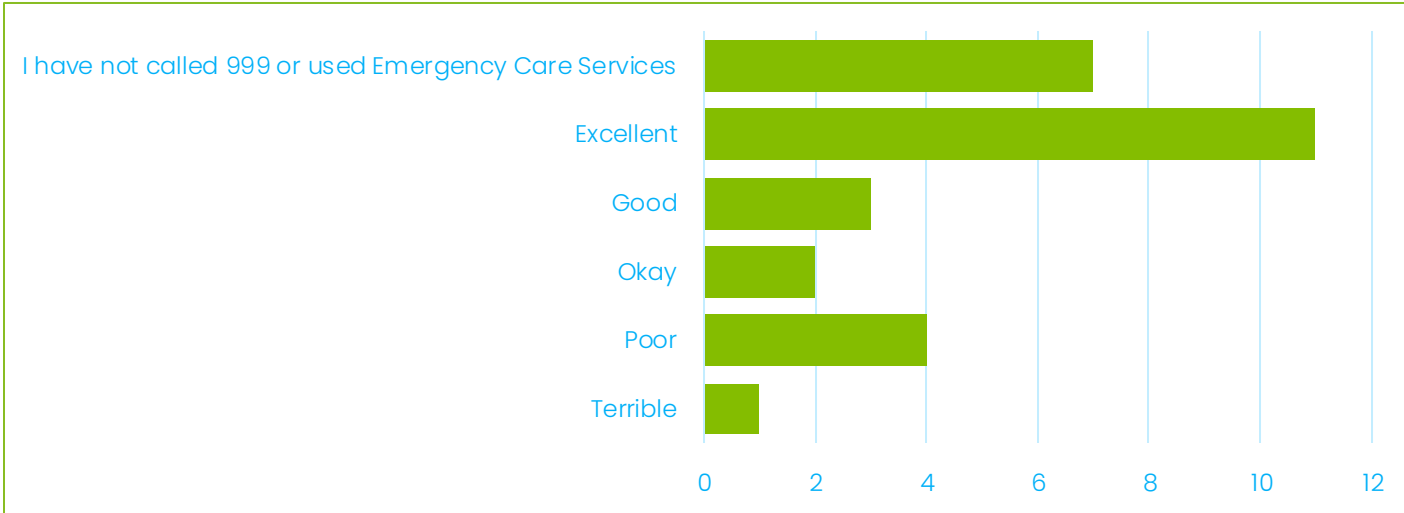


39% of LAS service users used the LAS service in the last 3 months. 47% of service users used the LAS more than 3 months ago.

| Q2. When did you last use the London Ambulance Service?            | Count of Q2. |
|--|--------------|
| I have not used the London Ambulance Service in the past 12 months | 4            |
| In the last 12 months  | 5            |
| In the last 3 months   | 11           |
| In the last 6 months   | 4            |
| More than 12 months ago  | 4            |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>28</b>    |

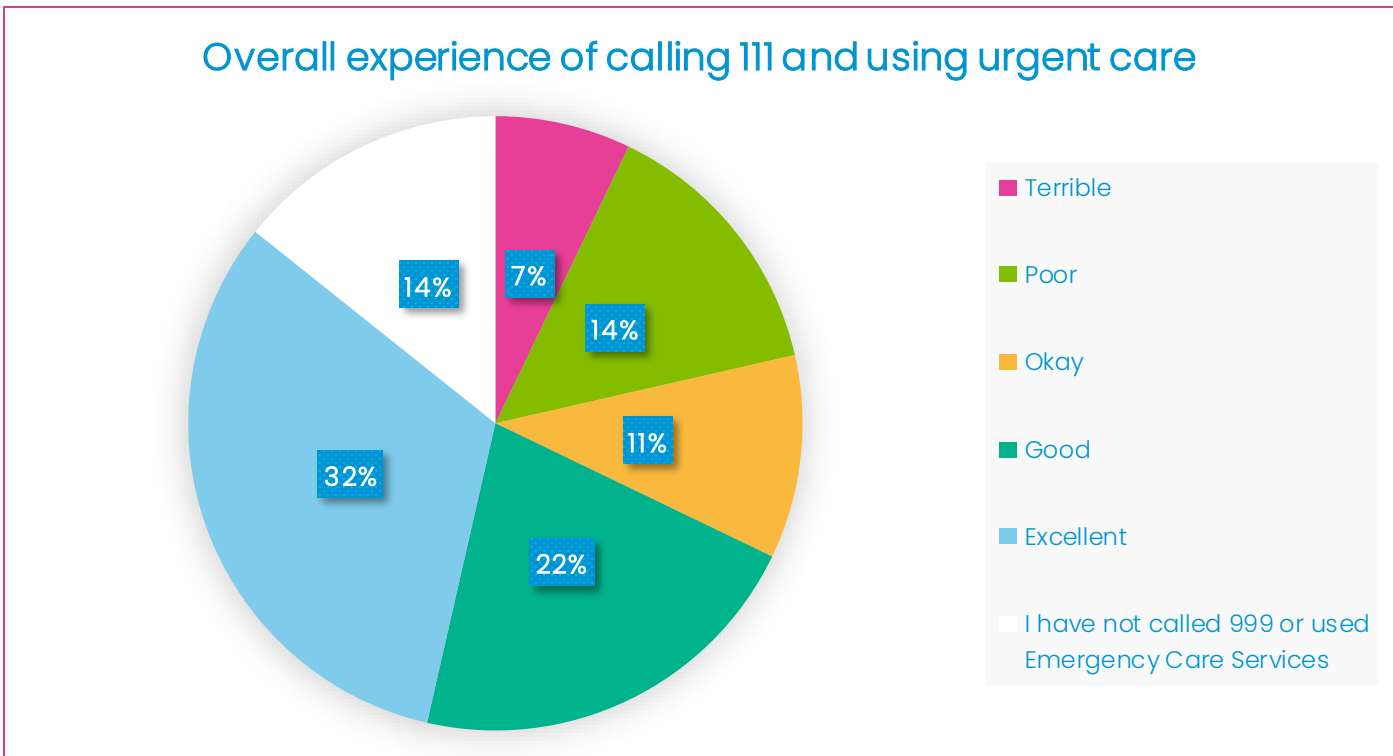
# Overall Experience with LAS Services

## Overall experience of calling 999 and using LAS emergency care

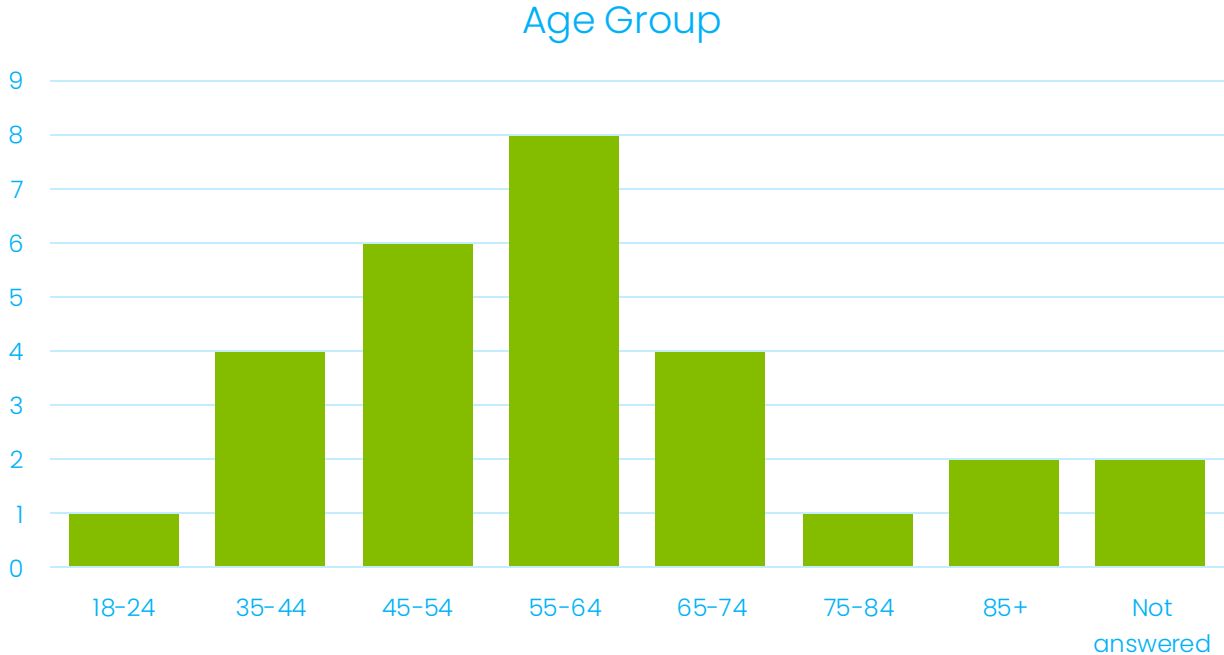
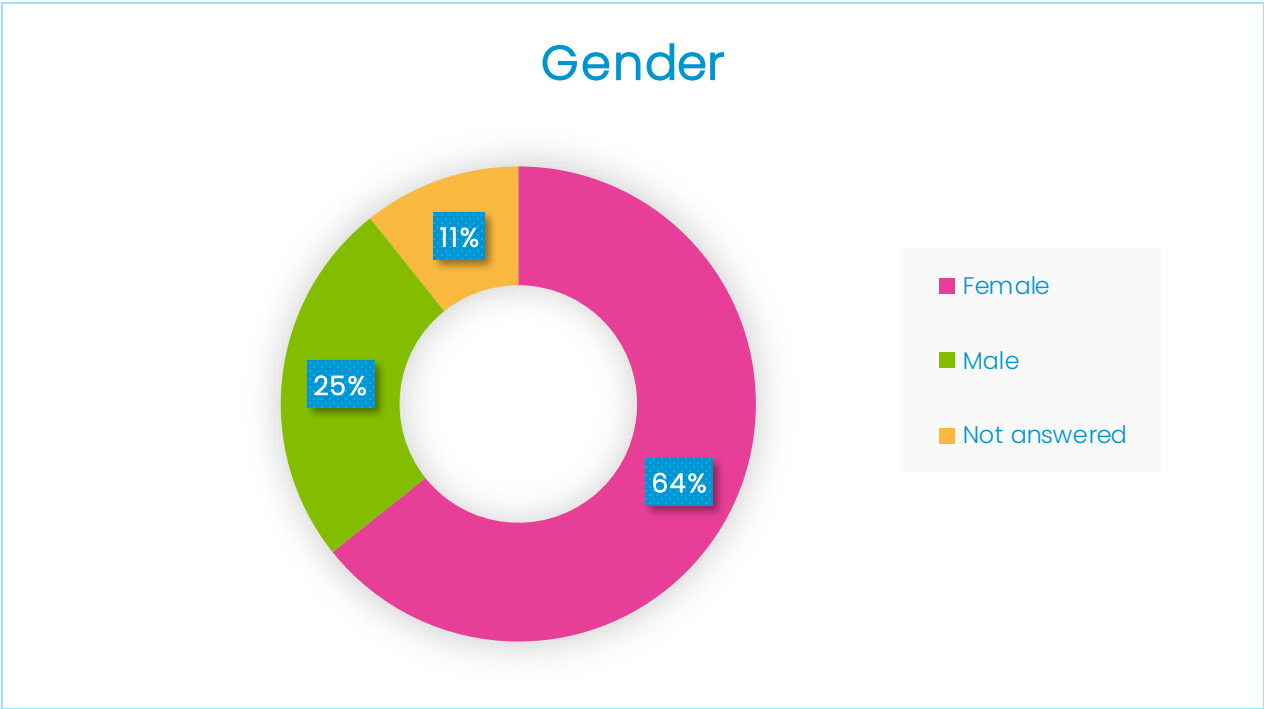


Most service users who have used the 999 calling service, 11 out of 21, rated their overall experience as Excellent.

9 out of 24 service users rated their experience of using the 111 calling service as Excellent.

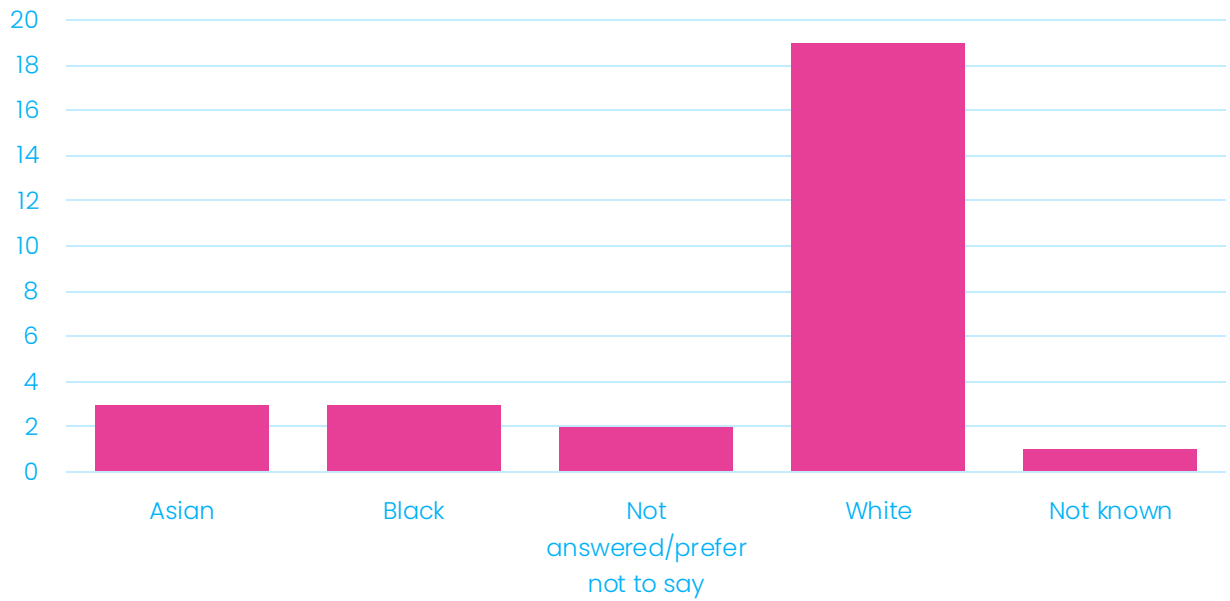


# Demographics

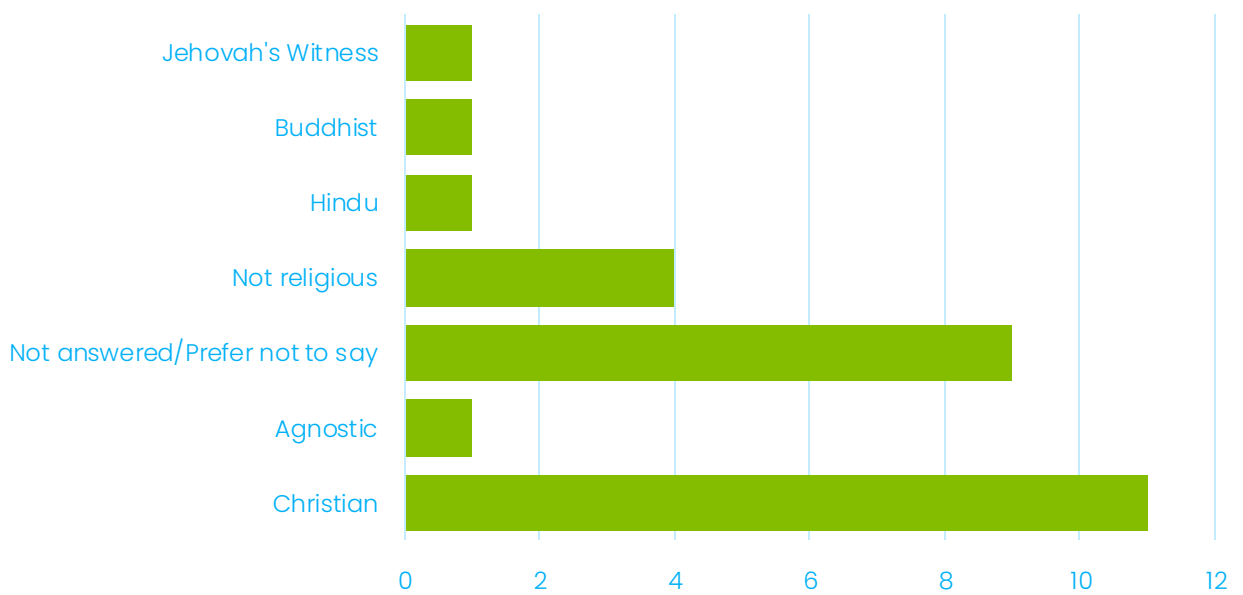


# Demographics

### Ethnic Background



### Religion



# Demographics

| Do you consider yourself to have a long-term condition or health and social care need? | Sum of Count |
|--|--------------|
| Yes  | 16           |
| No   | 9            |
| Prefer not to say  | 3            |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>28</b>    |

| Do you consider yourself to have a disability? | Sum of Count |
|--|--------------|
| No   | 18           |
| Yes  | 7            |
| Prefer not to say                              | 3            |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                             | <b>28</b>    |

| Do you take care of someone else? | Sum of Count |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Yes                               | 13           |
| No                                | 12           |
| Prefer not to say/ Not answered   | 3            |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                | <b>28</b>    |



# Feedback

How could LAS work with other parts of the healthcare system to improve the care you receive?'

Responses include:

"GP to be actively involved with LAS to administer care i.e. GP's treat patients in local surgeries as a community hospital available 24/7 and only where necessary use the LAS for a hospital transfer"

"By liaising with other health care providers that the patient is involved with."

"The links to mental health care are vital"

"I believe mental health emergency provision is lacking. LAS need support in that area. Also, LAS could have facilities to enable appointments to be made with various practitioners where emergency provision is not necessary."

"Perhaps could do more promotions to tell the public when it's necessary to call 999 and when it's not. Giving talks in schools may also help teach young people about its services and how to correctly use the emergency services."

"By updating the services that a patient may be known to use. Perhaps a number to call or even a text number where other professionals can get the medical information quickly."

"Maybe have a separate section of ambulance staff that solely deal with mental health issues."

"Public health campaign to educate public on the correct use of the 999 service and use of ED. Also, better funding for services in community to assess and keep patients out of hospital."

"Communication is lacking with the GP and hospitals. Maybe a portal can be opened up so that information is easily transferable instead of having to call them up for it. This way treatment can be given quicker."

# Case Studies

How could LAS work with other parts of the healthcare system to improve the care you receive?

“Could work with GPs, pharmacies and carer groups.”

“They need to communicate better with other departments and keep patients/relatives more informed about what is happening with their care. Can spend quite a long time trying to talk to departments on the phone.”

A service user that rated their overall experience with the LAS as Excellent said:

“I have attended several events for young people with Tourette’s where ambulances have had to be called, although not in London, but I feel certain events are more likely to have accidents inherently due to complex attendees needs. Planning a risk assessment beforehand would be cutting edge and welcomed. As a parent of a young adult with Tourette’s and who is also on the autistic spectrum one can never underestimate the value of awareness training of staff.”

A service user that rated their overall experience with the LAS as Excellent said:

“Referral to mental health services is unclear and crisis care difficult to find. I once had to call non-emergency care whilst I was in the middle of a panic attack. I was transferred to 999 then told off for calling LAS by the person who answered. I could have been transferred to crisis team or similar who would have helped. In the end I was transferred back to non-emergency and told to make a cup of tea.”

# Summary of Findings

The table below highlights the key issues identified through the engagement work carried out in Lewisham, and the key priorities and recommendations suggested for LAS to take forward in their strategy for 2023-2028.

The subsequent pages highlight each priority in turn and present the evidence base for this.

## Findings and Recommendations

| Key issue /priority identified   | Details  |
|--|--|
| 999:<br>Quick response time  | 5 out of 21 service users mentioned a quick response time from the ambulance service.  |
| 999:<br>Positive staff attitude  | 14 out of 21 service users mentioned staff members having a friendly, caring and/or professional attitude.   |
| 999:<br>Communicating response time                                    | 6 out of 21 service users mentioned that communicating with them about any delays would be appreciated.  |
| 111:<br>Long waiting times   | 12 out of 24 service users mentioned they experienced long waiting times either to get through to call handlers or to receive a call back.   |
| Increased public education for when to use 999 and emergency services. | Improving public education to reduce the number of unnecessary calls to 999 services and directing people to speak to a pharmacy, their GP or call 111 instead. LAS can promote their services more to inform the public about how to use urgent and emergency services. |

# Finding 1

## Response time for 999 service

5 out of 21 service users mentioned a quick response time from the ambulance service. 6 out of 21 service users mentioned a slow response time from the ambulance service.

### Negative feedback:

**“Waiting times are totally unacceptable... We’ve experienced a life changing outcome which may have been prevented by prompt treatment.”**

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 6 months and gave an overall rating of Okay

**“No arrival for hours for a bleeding pensioner who had fallen. Neighbours had to move him ourselves.”**

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 12 months and gave an overall rating of Poor

### Positive feedback:

**“Ambulance arrived quickly, I think it was within 10 minutes and the crew explained to us why they must take Mum to nearest hospital.”**

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Excellent

### Case studies

My daughter had to call an ambulance when I fell from a standing stretched up position on a chair and severely fractured my wrist. It came quickly and the staff were very reassuring and skilled at administering morphine in the ambulance. I believe some people more recently have had overly long waiting times which may have regrettable consequences. Covid rules preventing people having a person with them is unhelpful or was unhelpful where a person with additional needs that are invisible required support and advocacy from their loved one.

- Female, 55-64, White: Any other White background

# Finding 2

## Staff Attitude for 999 service

14 out of 21 service users mentioned staff members having a positive attitude.

14 out of 14 patients rated the service either Excellent, Good, or Okay mentioned staff members having a positive attitude.

### Positive feedback:

**“The 2 ladies from the ambulance service who attended my husband were very professional and treated him with respect and dignity.”**

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 12 months and gave an overall rating of Excellent

**“The ambulance staff really listened to what we were saying and our concerns and helped us.”**

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Excellent

**“Very caring staff in an overstretched situation.”**

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Okay

**“Paramedics were professional, friendly and re-assuring.”**

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Excellent

### Case studies

I must say that the ambulance care we have received for our adult daughter who has severe learning difficulties/semi non-verbal/ epilepsy and challenging behaviour has been absolutely fantastic. Our daughter has had to have an ambulance sadly on quite a few occasions over the last few years. The ambulance staff have been so wonderful, very understanding in very tricky circumstances with our daughter. I just think they have always gone above and beyond for our daughter and us.

- Female, 55-64, White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh Mixed

## Case Studies

I cut my main artery on a glass window. The 999 staff seemed very casual so I explained it was quite serious as I'd gone through the main artery, to which she responded "there's only one higher level of severity that I can mark this call, and that's if you're not breathing. And you are breathing, aren't you?" I was in a life or death situation and she got sarcastic! Would you believe it? The ambulance came and assessed me and I could read that shock and panic on their faces when they realised the severity, to which they said "We shouldn't be here!" She then explained that she was a junior and her assistant was a fireman. They had to call a senior member who drove to the scene. Essentially had I not known first aid and made a tourniquet I likely would have died as a result of the staff on the phone.

- **Male, 35-44, White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh Mixed**

# Finding 3

## Communication

Service users feel that communication is lacking and would prefer regular updates for their situation.

### Positive feedback:

**“Good communication between various services that are involved in help.”**

- Service user used the 111 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Excellent

**“The communication between the ambulance personnel and the injured is also very friendly.”**

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Good

### Negative feedback:

**“Very poor phone service and lack of communication.”**

- Service user used the 111 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Poor

**“The waiting time is longer and the communication is more troublesome.”**

- Service user used the 111 service in the last 12 months and gave an overall rating of Good

## Case Studies

Quick arrival to Lewisham hospital so they drove well but then I arrived and there were three doctors/nurses outside waiting for me only to say “We can’t take him here”. An argument ensued and they had to call the senior LAS staff who threatened to report them if they didn’t take me. Their argument was that they didn’t have an artery repair specialist in Lewisham and so I should be sent to Guys. The valid argument was that I was literally bleeding out and needed to be stabilised so that I could eventually go on to Guys. I would suggest communication here was lacking (as well as shocking service from Lewisham hospital of course!) I went on to almost lose my fingers as a result of an overly tight tourniquet fitted by Lewisham too! My service at Guys was then impeccable so chalk and cheese vs the 999, LAS and Lewisham services.

- Male, 35-44, White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh Mixed

# Finding 4

## Long waiting times 111 service

12 out of 24 service users mentioned they experienced long waiting times either to get a hold of a member of staff or to receive a call back. Many service users are understanding of how overwhelmed the LAS is, but would appreciate better communication of updates for transport, logistical and medical processes.

### Negative feedback:

**“Too long wait times on phone, no priority for vulnerable i.e., elderly and young”**

- Service user used the 111 service in the last 12 months and gave an overall rating of Terrible

**“It can take a long time to get through to someone and the advice is not always useful, the pharmacy is more reliable in my opinion.”**

- Service user used the 111 service in the last 12 months and gave an overall rating of Good

**“Long waiting times need to be dealt with. Perhaps offer a virtual service too.”**

- Service user used the 111 service and gave an overall rating of Excellent

### Case Studies

Waiting times to speak to someone in the 1st instance are unacceptable. The doctor call-back system does not work. It's totally unacceptable when one has serious concerns to wait hours or days for call-back. I recently visited a walk in urgent care centre. Although the wait was several hours I was confident of ability to speak with a doctor and receive timely treatment. More urgent care centres would improve patient confidence and I believe reduce A&E attendance.

- **Female, 65-74, White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh Mixed**

Too long spent on hold. This has meant that when trying to contact the service with seniors they have said not to bother because “They are obviously too busy to bother with me”. More than one of the seniors from the club I volunteer at has decided not to seek help at all after being left on hold for too long even with important issues.

- **Female, 35-44, White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh Mixed**



# Finding 5

## Public education

5 service users mentioned that the LAS services should promote their services more and work more closely with other health care services to improve efficiency, relieve pressure off the service, decrease waiting times and inform the public about the many services available to them.

### Feedback:

“Perhaps could do more promotions to tell the public when it's necessary to call 999 and when it's not. Giving talks in schools may also help teach young people about its services and how to correctly use the emergency services.

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Excellent

Wider availability of information about the processes of how LAS work on the ground level. EG to promote awareness of how crew work in an emergency and how members of the public/patients can help to ensure services are provided promptly and without delays.

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Excellent

Our experience shows that it is working well. This was at a time when the emergency service was being overwhelmed. I think that the messages to the public about when/not to call an ambulance do seem to be getting through - keep them up.

- Service user used the 999 service in the last 3 months and gave an overall rating of Excellent

## Case Studies

A service user spoke about how they were really worried about their Mum and how the 111 service contacted a doctor who phoned back quickly and prescribed antibiotics. They credited the extended advice the doctor gave. Specifically, advice and details about nearby out of hours. They wanted to highlight the listening skills, prompt responses from doctors and up to date information, e.g. crisis houses, late night chemists, that they experienced from the LAS. They added that, perhaps there can be on-hand trained medical staff who can visit elderly or disabled people who have fallen.

- Female, 55-64, Black/Black British - Caribbean

# Additional considerations

## Increased communication and information sharing across healthcare providers

Service users feel that there should be more efficient ways of accessing patient information across health care providers as there are long waiting times to receive treatment and medication. Suggestions were made for the LAS to work more closely with GPs, hospitals, care homes and mental health providers.

## Increased neurodiversity training

Service users have asked for LAS staff to have increased training on neurodiversity so that neurodivergent people have easier access to LAS services.

---

## Limitations

This report is based on our observations and the views and residents that Healthwatch spoke to on the day of our carers forum visit, discharge lounge visit, and those that completed the survey through Smart survey. We recognise that it does not necessarily represent the views and experiences of all the residents in the borough who have used the London Ambulance Service.



### Contact Us

If you would like to discuss this report or our work, please get in touch



<https://www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk/>



020 3886 0196



[info@healthwatchlewisham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchlewisham.co.uk)