

November Feedback Report 2022

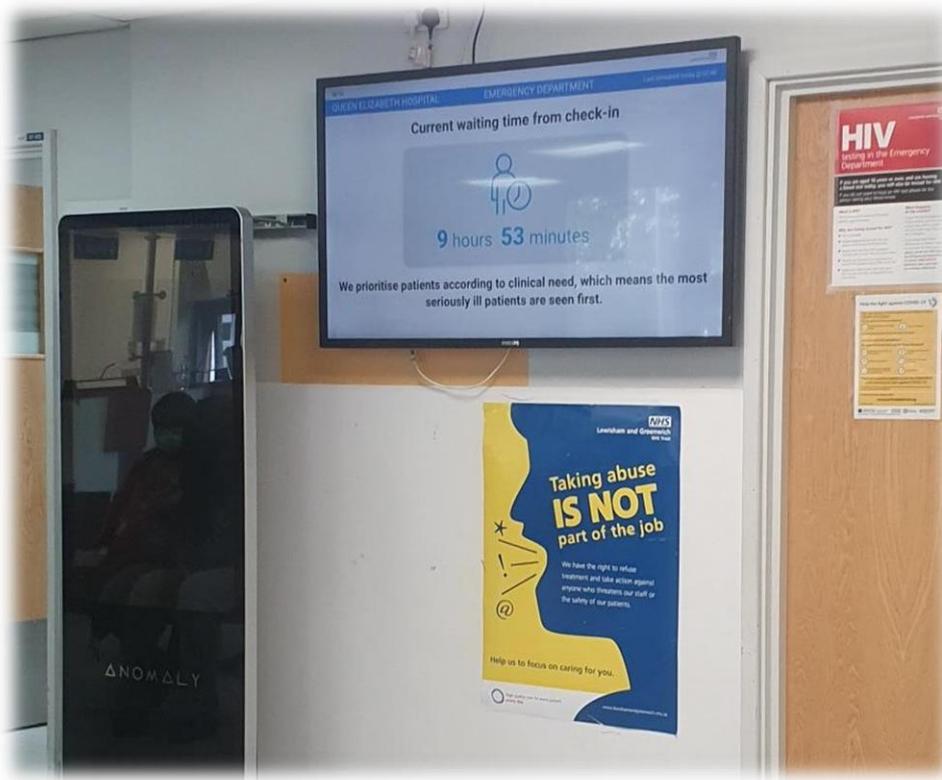


Image of 9 hour 53 minute waiting time at A&E, Queen Elizabeth Hospital submitted by a service user

During November, we heard from 312 service users from the following:

- Calls and emails to Healthwatch Greenwich from Greenwich residents and service users
- Meetings between Healthwatch Greenwich and groups of Greenwich service users or advocates
- Healthwatch Greenwich outreach and engagement activity
- Conversations as seen on social media, and on community and neighbourhood sites
- Online reviews of services

We are the independent champion for anyone who uses the NHS or publicly funded health or social care in Greenwich. Our role is to hold a mirror up to services by collecting and collating residents experience of health and care services. We are transparent by publishing feedback and in using this insight to work with commissioners, providers, and regulators to improve services for all.

While we are confident the majority of local people receive an exemplary service from the NHS, and health/care organisations - delivered by skilled and dedicated staff, people rarely come to Healthwatch Greenwich or provide feedback when things have gone well. As such, our feedback reports will never be 'balanced'. However, our open reporting, active questioning, and sharing of insights and concerns offers a rich bank of learning for all with an interest and commitment to equity within health and care services and providing the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

Primary Care

GP services - Getting an appointment

You told us you can't get face to face GP appointments when you call reception. Your GP practice tells you to go to Queen Elizabeth Hospital or to contact 111. The hospital or 111 operators tell you to contact your GP and you go around in circles.

"Doesn't matter when I call, or if I use the DR.IQ [app] somehow they hardly ever have available appointments now ... but then when I did get one ... a face to face one, there wasn't anyone else waiting other than me in the waiting area - but yet they don't have appointments? It's getting much worse and they advised me to go to Queen Elizabeth. I've gone there before and they just sent me back to my own GP.... it's a vicious cycle and absolutely ridiculous now"

"Rang at 8.30. 1 hour 55 mins to get through. For my other half. Told no urgent calls for treatment for ulcers on tonsils. Advised to call 111. Did

that. They made a referral back to the GP for treatment. Called surgery again, 2hrs on phone got cut off. On the phone again now for another hour. So gone full circle”

“I’m fed up with struggling with the receptionist to get an appointment. I had a chest infection earlier this year and I was forced to spend all day in A&E twice before they would give me any antibiotics. A massive waste of the NHS’s resources”.

“It’s an absolute joke calling the practice for any queries. I have called them couple of times for my 1 year old daughter. They don’t care regarding the age or any severity. They just end the call, saying call 111. And the funny part is, 111 advises you to call back your GP again”

GP services – Digital Access

You told us that you can book appointments on GP apps and websites:

“I do an Econsult at this surgery’ to bypass the receptionist when I can”

“I have found that using the phone is a waste of my time and patience, so I use the website. It’s much quicker and you get a reply so fast”

“Never had a problem. If I use Dr.IQ someone always calls me”

You told us that you could get appointments with nurses:

“I can see the nurse for checks but can never get to see the doctor”

Response from NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (Greenwich):

We cannot comment on individual cases without knowing the details but we have passed on the feedback to the individual surgeries listed and asked them to respond.

We understand that primary care services are under a great deal of pressure at the moment and that getting access to appointments can be frustrating for patients. We are working with our GP surgeries to try and improve access but unfortunately there is no straightforward solution. All of

our practices in Greenwich are providing face to face appointments when it is clinically required.

In the borough of Greenwich we have funded additional primary care appointments from 8am to 8pm on Sundays which can be directly booked by the NHS 111 service.

We have been running the [#YourPrimaryCare](#) campaign across south east London. The campaign aims include informing people about:

- the wide range of professionals now working in primary care services
- telephone or video appointments
- using the NHS App or the NHS website to order repeat prescriptions, book appointments, view health records etc
- using online forms to consult a GP or health professional
- how to register with a GP surgery

The digital campaign adverts have been seen by over 400,000 people across south east London so far with more than 10,000 people clicking on them.

We are pleased to see feedback that people have been able to get access digitally. We acknowledge that accessing services this way isn't appropriate for everyone, however the more people who are supported to access this way the easier it will be for people who struggle with digital to get the access they need. For example there will be less people trying to get through on phone lines.

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

Mental health assessments

You told us that you had to wait for over a month for a mental health assessment and a year for the results.

"I was referred to therapy and was assessed but never heard back. That was a year ago!"

“I am homeless and sleep on the street. Even though my GP² registered me without a fixed address, I had to wait for a month to get a mental health assessment”

Response from Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust:

I was sorry to read about your experience of services at Oxleas. Providing access to psychological therapies is something we have been working hard on over the last year with the result that currently no-one has to wait more than eighteen weeks to be seen by a psychological therapist. This conforms to the standards which are set by the NHS Constitution and monitored by NHS England.

We are also working closely with a range of partners to improve the experience of accessing our services for people who are homeless. This work is being taken forward as part of the Rough Sleeping and Mental Health Programme for South London and we will be employing additional staff who will be focussing on this important work.

Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

You told us dermatology and gynaecology staff are efficient, caring and kind.

“My husband had a dermatology appointment this morning. We arrived at 10.15 and were seen within 15 minutes and offered removal of growth on face. Had to wait less than 20 minutes for procedure to take place. We were back home by 12noon. Grateful thanks to the whole team for caring, kind and professional service”

“Fantastic experience in the Gynae department for a scan and referral. Friendly & caring staff & very reassuring. Exceeded expectations”

You told us that A&E was so busy this month that ambulances had to go to neighbouring hospitals.

“My 89 year old father was put in an ambulance and taken to Woolwich Queen Elizabeth's hospital. There were no beds. The ambulance was then

directed to Lewisham Hosp and then back to Queen Elizabeth Hospital whilst waiting to find out if he was to be taken to St Thomas's Hospital"

"Complete chaos in A&E. My husband was brought in by ambulance. No beds available. We waited 12hrs to be seen and my husband had another seizure in the waiting area. I was told my husband was not a priority case by one of the nurses after having had a major seizure and having heart problems"

Lauren's story - "The estimated waiting time was 9 hours 53 minutes"³

Lauren, a service user living with disabilities, injured her foot. In pain, she phoned 111 and was advised to go to Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Urgent Care department. *"I had been told to present at 7am at the time of the shift handover. The NHS 111 Urgent Care receptionist did not show up, so I was added to the A&E wait list"*

The estimated waiting time for A&E was over 9 hours. *"The wait time on the TV Screen was all anyone had to look at... It was impossible to leave your seat to go and get food or even a drink of water as you had absolutely no idea when you would be called"*

She was told by a nurse that they were understaffed that day. Lauren describes the atmosphere in the waiting area as *"horrible"* and *"distressing"*. *"There was absolutely no privacy..."*

Lauren made a complaint to the Trust. *"It took me 3 days to get that x-ray arranged for a really minor issue and I should never have been sent to QE A&E as the triage meant a long wait with no consideration of my pre-existing disability"*

LGT responded to Lauren's formal complaint and apologised: *"On this particular day, the ED were faced with many challenges, including staff shortages, lack of flow through the department due to unavailability of ward beds and seeing an influx of very unwell patients, some with life-threatening injuries / illnesses that had to take priority to be seen"*

Lauren's X-ray confirmed she had broken a bone in her foot, but six months later it's still not healed. *"I don't know what to do as I cannot get a G.P. appointment either. My practice insists you call at 8am and all the day's appointments are gone in 15 minutes"⁴*

Response from Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust:

We have already been in touch with Lauren following her complaint, and have apologised. The NHS is under continued significant pressure. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital teams are working really hard on several projects to improve flow across the site, and to support the emergency department. We are very sorry that patients are having to wait for long periods, however, we clinically triage patients to manage those who are the most sick.

Amy's experience: "I've only had one phone call from the Breast Cancer nurse in 9 months"

Amy noticed a lump in her breast in early 2022. She went to her GP⁵ and was referred to the Breast Clinic at Queen Elizabeth Hospital to have a biopsy. *"I can't fault my GP⁶, they're great – whenever I need an appointment, I can get one straight away. I just request one on the app"*

The following month, the Breast Clinic called Amy with an appointment at the Macmillan Cancer Unit. *"As soon as I got that call, I knew it was cancer, why else would I be going to the MacMillan Cancer unit? I was anxious for that whole week – thinking the worst and trying to mentally prepare myself"*

At that appointment, Amy was diagnosed with breast cancer. She noticed lots of posters and leaflets but felt overwhelmed by the diagnosis and didn't pick any information up. Prescribed with medication, Amy was told the Breast Cancer nurse would call in two weeks. Amy anxiously waited for the call – but no one rang. *"It felt like they just told me I had cancer and left me to get on with it"*

Amy tried calling the Breast Cancer Clinic to ask for a follow-up and some support. *"The man on the phone was rude. I asked for the Breast Cancer nurse, and he said "What do you need her for? I said that 'a bit of support would be nice'. I told them I didn't know what the next steps were and what they were planning"*

Hoping to get information from the Breast Cancer nurse, but not receiving a call, Amy went online. ***“I went on the Breast Cancer Now website and downloaded all these resources – guides on ‘What to expect after surgery’ and ‘What to expect during chemo’”***

In the 9 months since her diagnosis, Amy’s had one call from the Breast Cancer nurse. ***“It was a really short call – she told me that surgery would be planned and that there’s a possibility of chemo after”***

Every three months she has a hospital check-up appointment with a doctor. ***“These appointments last about 5 minutes. I’m not sure how they can properly check the size of the tumor without a scan? Sometimes they just feel my breast and that’s it – done”***

At her last check-up appointment, Amy saw a different doctor. ***“This doctor was different – the appointment lasted 20–30 minutes and I felt like I was thoroughly examined. It felt like she was actually listening to me, and she ordered some scans. I honestly don’t know how they were monitoring my tumor before”***

Amy asked again what type of surgery she was going to have, and when she was likely to have it. ***“I was told that I would maybe have surgery before Christmas, but I don’t know what type of surgery it could be. They said it could be a lumpectomy – but they couldn’t confirm without the scan results. I wasn’t given any information on what a lumpectomy was, how they do it, or what the risks could be. How am I supposed to know what they are talking about if they don’t give me any information? I had to go online and try and find this for myself”***

Amy suffers from anxiety. In October, Amy was prescribed antidepressants by her GP. Amy says her mental health problems have been made worse with the worry of her diagnosis. Amy says she’s not been given any information about how to access mental health support. ***“I started to get anxious again, thinking “Am I going to lose my whole breast? I am worried they’re not doing enough and they’re not doing it quickly. I’ve just had a complete lack of information, support, and communication from them and feel left in the dark”***

Response from Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust:

Following contact from Healthwatch we have been in contact with Amy, and will be meeting with her, to discuss her experience and her past and future treatment.

Next Steps

We follow up on all concerns or issues raised.

We work with commissioners, providers, regulators, and service users to understand where services are working well and where further development may be needed.

Contact Us

For more information on our feedback report, contact Penny:

'penny@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk'

Telephone: 02083018340

Email: Info@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk

Twitter: @HWGreenwich

Facebook: @healthwatchgreenwich