



**Healthwatch Lambeth**  
**Enter and View: Right for Everyone**  
**Opticians Visits Report**

January 2018

# About Healthwatch Lambeth



**Healthwatch  
Lambeth is the  
independent health  
and social care  
champion for local  
people.**



We work to ensure your voice counts when it comes to shaping and improving services. We address inequalities in health and care, to help ensure everyone gets the services they need. We are a charity and membership body for Lambeth residents and voluntary organisations.

There are local Healthwatches across the country as well as a national body, Healthwatch England.

## **About Enter and View Visits**

Our Enter and View programme involves visiting publicly funded health and social care services in Lambeth to see what is going on and talk to service users, their relatives and carers, as well as staff.

Every local Healthwatch has a legal responsibility to carry out an Enter and View programme. But we are not inspectors. Instead, we focus on what it is like for people receiving care. We provide extra eyes and ears, especially for the most isolated and vulnerable. Our visits are carried out by trained, authorised volunteers. Our Authorised Representatives have completed the full Enter and View training and our Authorised Visitors have completed an adapted programme.



# Visit overview

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**Services** Boots Opticians (Clapham), Clear Vision, Medirex Opticians (Wilcox Close), Opticalise, Real Eyes (Streatham), R Woodfall, Specsavers Opticians (Brixton), Tesco Opticians (Streatham)

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**Date of visits** May and June 2017

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**Enter and View Team** **Authorised Visitors:** Zetty Angus, Maggie Brennan, Richard Keagan-Bull, Anna Finch, Sabina Laher, Brian Stocker, Owen Taylor, Liz Hanlon (family carer), Laura VanBemmel (Lambeth Mencap outreach and development worker)  
**Authorised Representative:** Jane Abraham (Lambeth Learning Disability Assembly service user involvement worker)

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**Service liaison link** Practice managers

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# Introduction



## Purpose of visits

This visits programme was part of our Right for Everyone project, a partnership initiative with Lambeth Mencap and Lambeth Learning Disability Assembly to investigate how well community health services work for people with learning disabilities. It was funded by NHS Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group. The project, which ran from 2015 to 2017, also included visits to healthy living pharmacies, GP practices, dentists and foot clinics.

We focused on services for people with learning disabilities because there is wide-ranging evidence of inequalities experienced by this user group in accessing and receiving healthcare<sup>1</sup>.

Our visits aimed to assess:

- how accessible the service is
- the quality of information and advice provided
- how kind the service is.

By drawing on the insights from our visits featured in this report, we hope that good practice can be supported and extended

<sup>1</sup> Department of Health: Premature Deaths of People with Learning Disabilities: Progress Update, Sept 2014

across all community optician services in Lambeth.

Our Right for Everyone programme also aimed to support the learning disability community in Lambeth to develop greater confidence to use primary care services more effectively<sup>2</sup>. The project did this in two ways; by training local people with learning disabilities to carry out these visits as experts by experience, and by running a series of events hosted by the Learning Disability Assembly to share our findings and promote the services and support available.

We also believe that by working to ensure services are right for people with learning disabilities, they are more likely to become right for everyone. Further details of our Right for Everyone project is available at [www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/r4e](http://www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/r4e)

## Participants

### Services

For this programme, given the project resources, we aimed to visit eight opticians across the borough. We selected services from each of the three localities in Lambeth (see page 1). Half of our sample were

<sup>2</sup> In Lambeth, there is a particularly low take up amongst people with learning disabilities of GP health checks and high levels of preventable hospital admissions: Public Health England: Lambeth Learning Disabilities Profile 2013



# Introduction

opticians which people with learning disabilities told us they use. We also selected an even mix of independent and chain stores. Visits were pre-arranged with each service and we completed all eight as planned.

## Visitors

Ten Right for Everyone Enter and View Authorised Visitors (including one Authorised Representative) took part in this programme. Each visiting team included two people with learning disabilities and a supporter (either a family carer or support worker). A note-taker was also present. Team members had a range of communication and mobility abilities.

Visitors and supporters had completed an adapted Enter and View training programme to become Healthwatch Lambeth Authorised Visitors for services which are open to the public. Authorised Visitors must have a criminal record check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or be accompanied by a person with a DBS certificate. In addition, three of our lead supporters for this programme are full Enter and View Authorised Representatives, approved to visit any publicly funded health or care service<sup>3</sup>.

## Methodology

During the visits, our Enter and View team used a range of criteria to assess each opticians including physical accessibility, staff behaviours and attitudes, and the type and accessibility of information provided (see appendix). Indicators for the physical accessibility of the service were partly developed from an easy read access survey by Leonard Cheshire Disability and were also designed to complement the recent DisabledGo premises audit<sup>4</sup> of local services in Lambeth.

Alongside a checklist, our visitors asked questions to the reception team including some practice managers, an optometrist and a dispensing optician (where available).

For this project, we did not ask for feedback from other patients during our visits. Instead, our trained visitors used their own insights as experts by experience<sup>5</sup> to assess how well the services work for people with learning disabilities.

Findings were analysed by Healthwatch staff.

<sup>3</sup> Details of our Enter and View programme: [www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/enterandview](http://www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/enterandview)

<sup>4</sup> [www.disabledgo.com/organisations/london-borough-of-lambeth/main](http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/london-borough-of-lambeth/main)

# Findings

## Physical accessibility

### External environment

Our teams were able to locate each of the opticians we visited easily. However, one group discovered that the service they were visiting was integrated into a pharmacy, and they did not feel its presence was obvious from the outside. In contrast, another optician that was located in a supermarket was easy to identify, with good signage.

Our teams found all but one of the opticians we visited easy to enter. However, visitors noticed that several had front doors which weren't automatic, making it harder for people in wheelchairs to access. One doorway was also a tight squeeze for buggies or wheelchairs.

The other less accessible premises had two steps at the doorway. Our visitors also noticed the door had lots of signs on it, which they didn't find helpful.

### Internal environment

Most premises had space for wheelchairs and buggies inside, but two of the shop floors felt particularly small and one of these was also quite cluttered. Another service was very busy during our visit and had several reception desks, both of which gave the impression of limited space.

## Information displays

Most of the information displays in the opticians were dedicated to adverts for branded glasses. Only three of the opticians that we visited had information about eye care on the walls. Our visitors found this information either too technical or presented in *lots of boring writing* in two premises. Only one team reported a good, comprehensive mix of information in large, clear lettering covering eye tests and costs of frames as well as eye care: *We all agreed it was far and away the best we had seen.*

The same opticians also displayed their glasses very clearly according to price groups. None of our visiting teams noticed a similar approach in the other providers they went to.

## Waiting rooms

Most premises had waiting areas in or next to the shop area. They were quite small but pleasant spaces. Two had magazines to read and one had fresh flowers which made the space very cheerful. One optician did not have a dedicated waiting area at all.

## At reception

### Booking in

On arrival, all visitors booked in with reception staff at a desk. Most of our teams reported that the booking in process was straight forward, although the team visiting the optician in the pharmacy found it a little confusing as the receptionist seemed to be

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based in the pharmacy. Another team noted that although staff were wearing badges with their job titles, they were difficult to read. This also made it harder to understand who was booking them in.

One team who found the opticians they visited busy on their arrival, reported that it was very noisy in the shop, making the booking in process a little difficult for our visitors. The team felt the noise and lack of privacy could be off-putting for shy people. However, the team noticed a sign advertising a private room which customers can request to use, although this was upstairs with no lift available.

## Making an appointment

All the opticians we visited told us you could phone up to make an appointment for an eye test, or come in to the shop to book in person. Two of the services said that they also have an online booking facility.

Most of the opticians accepted walk-in appointments as well, depending on availability.

When our teams asked whether customers could choose who to see for an eye test, six opticians offered a choice of optometrists but two did not.

Three services said they offered home visits, but one explained that this option was only available for their housebound customers.

Our visitors were also told that GPs sometimes request home visits for their patients. One opticians told us that they did not offer home visits.

## Charges

All the receptionists explained to our visitors that NHS patients do not have to pay for an eye test. Most also mentioned that it was also free for people on some benefits and for other groups eg under 16s or those in full time education.

One receptionist explained that their service waived their standard eye test charge if customers buy glasses afterwards.

Only one team noticed information about eye test charges on display. Another team was told *you simply need to ask [about charges]* and a third group was told that the optician carrying out the eye test would explain about medical exemptions to charges. This team felt it wasn't clear until the eye test had started whether you would have to pay.

## Recommendation 1

**All opticians should have clear information about eye test charges on display at reception.**

# Findings

## Customer support

### Support for people with learning disabilities

We asked each service whether they offered any extra help to people with learning disabilities. All but one of the opticians told us they offer longer appointments to avoid rushing people. Meanwhile, the other service said they try to keep appointments short.

One optician described breaking the appointment down into short sessions and another said they offered pre-visits to explain the procedures involved and to enable customers to familiarise themselves with the environment and the equipment.

Half of the services said that customers were welcome to bring chaperones or supporters with them. One optometrist was under the impression that chaperones could be arranged through the local authority.

Four also told us they follow up appointment letters with phone call reminders. Three mentioned offering help with filling in forms, which they note on the person's record. However, only one optician was able to show us easy read materials (see written resources section below).

One optician hosts monthly visits from a specialist from the Royal Free Hospital for some customers with learning disabilities.

### Other customer communication needs

None of the services mentioned any particular support they could offer for customers with other disabilities. One told us braille users would use the low vision service provided by Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Foundation Trust.

We also asked about support for carers but none of the opticians kept a carers register or offered particular help for this group. Only one optician mentioned the importance of working with carers to help support family members or clients using their service.

When we asked about support for people with limited English, five services told us that they had a multi-lingual staff team who helped with interpretation for certain languages, and most said customers were welcome to bring someone to help with translation. However, none offered a professional interpretation service.

Only one service said they ask customers when booking an appointment whether they have any support needs.

## Recommendation 2

**All practices should develop procedures to ensure they ask or check with customers whether they have any communication needs, record those needs**



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and act on them, in line with the Accessible Information Standard.<sup>5</sup>

## Eye tests

### Eye test demonstration

We asked all the opticians to show our visitors what an eye test involved. All our teams were invited into a consulting room, shown the equipment and given an explanation of what it was for.

Three optometrists explained that they can also use numbers, letters and pictures instead, for those who might find the equipment difficult, such as children and some people with learning disabilities.

The optometrists also explained that they start examinations with general questions about the person's health. Our teams were told that advice can be provided on topics such as healthy eating for the eyes, sun protection and visual display unit use, and treating conditions such as itchy eyes.

These explanations of the eye test were thorough but some were quite technical, making it difficult for our teams to understand.

When we asked how they would support someone who might be frightened about

having an eye test, most of the optometrists stressed the importance of explaining the process, half reiterated that people could bring someone with them and a similar number said they would plan the session to make it work for the individual. Some gave specific examples such as keeping the door open in small examination rooms and inviting a companion to demonstrate the equipment first.

### Explaining treatment options

All the optometrists acknowledged that test results and prescriptions were not available in easy read, but reassured our teams that they always talk through test results with customers.

The optometrists also all explained that for any problems that couldn't be resolved by the opticians, customers would be referred to their GP or where necessary, a specialist hospital service. Two optometrists told us that their opticians was part of a local triage system, taking referrals from GPs to avoid unnecessary referrals to hospitals.

All explained that customers needing glasses or contact lenses would be invited to choose from the shop display, with assistance from a dispensing optician. Only one of the opticians we visited said they offered laser treatment.

<sup>5</sup> Accessible Information Standard:  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/accessibleinfo/>

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## Choosing glasses and lenses

All the opticians confirmed that if someone needed glasses or contact lenses following an eye test, they would be given a copy of their prescription. One dispensing optician said this was a legal right for customers.

All our teams were also told that there is no obligation to buy products from the same place that you have your eyes tested. However, one service said that they advise customers to get their glasses made wherever they have their eyes tested in case there is an error in either the test or a problem with the glasses. Another said that for new customers, they will ask their previous opticians to fax a copy of their prescription over.

All the services said they help customers to choose glasses based on the person's needs, preferences, face shape and budget. Some said they offered discounts on more expensive frames for NHS customers, as the NHS range is quite limited. One optician said customers can take selfies on an iPad to help with the choice. Another offered a 30 day trial for glasses which can be returned or exchanged.

## Written resources

Three opticians gave our visitors information leaflets from the College of Optometrists about eye conditions. They were clear read rather than easy read, and looked quite technical to our visitors.

One optician said they provided a more accessible version of the eye test results form than the standard NHS one. But when we were given a copy, it still looked very technical to our team.

Only one optician provided some easy read material: this was a photocopy of a booklet produced by SeeAbility, telling the optometrist about meq. This was a resource to help someone prepare for an optician's visit and to inform the optometrist about a patient's history, rather than information provision for the customer.

## Recommendation 3

**Optometrists should make use of easy read materials for customers with learning disabilities such as SeeAbility's fact sheets on eye conditions and its optometrist feedback form to help explain test results.<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>6</sup> SeeAbility eye conditions fact sheets: <https://www.seeability.org/eye-conditions> and Feedback from my optometrist form:

<https://www.seeability.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=8fc94e9a-1004-407d-9b82-538216622a76>

# Findings

## Complaints process

When our teams asked about the complaints process at each service, all but one told us the first step would be to talk to a member of staff, with half specifying the practice manager. The other opticians said their policy requires customers to fill out a form first, which is then followed up by the manager. However, the member of staff was unable to give us a copy of the form. Some services mentioned a company helpline or website as a follow up step for unresolved issues or as an alternative way to make a complaint. Only one service mentioned the NHS complaints process.

Our visitors found complaints information displayed on the wall in three opticians, and our teams thought only one of these (the one with good signage) presented it clearly. We also noticed a suggestions box in one opticians, although it wasn't very prominent.

## Recommendation 4

**Practices should ensure that information about the complaints process is clearly displayed and copies are available to take away. They should also review their policy to ensure it includes the pathway for NHS customers.**

## Practice staff behaviour and attitudes

Most services were expecting and prepared for our visits. However, receptionists at two opticians did not seem aware that our team would be coming, leading to some initial confusion and a strained start to one visit, which was resolved when we asked for the key contact we had made arrangements with. One other service had forgotten about our visit and there was a half hour delay for staff members to arrive from another store, which they were quick to apologise for.

## Reception staff

Our visitors found most of the staff we met at reception to be professional and friendly, with ready smiles and good eye contact. Half of those we met listened well and were helpful. One in particular was happy to chat about things visitors were interested in, such as celebrities using the store, while still maintaining their professionalism. They didn't spread any gossip!

However, three of our teams felt rushed through reception and felt that a couple of the reception staff they encountered appeared nervous when talking to our group.

## Optometrists

All the optometrists engaged with our teams, with only one directing their responses towards the team supporter and notetaker.

# Findings

rather than our learning-disabled team members.

One team was told that the optometrist they met specialised in home visits and working with vulnerable people. Although they explained and demonstrated the different techniques they used with this client group effectively, our team supporter found this optometrist a bit condescending at times, for example, putting children's stickers on our visitors (which they did welcome, however).

Other teams felt they were treated respectfully, even though some explanations were too technical or delivered very quickly.

## Conclusion

Our teams enjoyed their visits to all the opticians that participated in the Right for Everyone project and we were pleased that all eight services agreed to take part.

On the whole, our visiting teams found these opticians easy to use, with staff demonstrating a professional approach to customer care. However, our feeling is that staff teams could benefit from training opportunities to increase their confidence and communication skills around learning disabilities, such as the Local Optical Committee Support Unit's online learning disabilities distance learning course, perhaps.

As reflected in our recommendations, appropriate instore written information appears to be a key area for improvement, particularly regarding:

- costs for eye tests and glasses
- eye test results
- complaints procedures
- easy read information on eye health.

We would encourage individual providers to review and improve their own customer information resources and make use of suitable tailored easy read materials as they become available.

We would like to thank all practices for their time in hosting our Right for Everyone visits and we hope the experience and our findings prove useful in supporting the development of their services.



# Recommendations

For ease of reference, we list our recommendations from our opticians visits below:

## Recommendation 1

All opticians should have clear information about eye test charges on display at reception.

## Recommendation 2

All practices should develop procedures to ensure they ask or check with customers whether they have any communication needs, record those needs and act on them, in line with the Accessible Information Standard.

## Recommendation 3

Optometrists should make use of easy read materials for customers with learning disabilities such as SeeAbility<sup>®</sup> fact sheets on eye conditions and its optometrist feedback form to help explain test results.

## Recommendation 4

Practices should ensure that information about the complaints process is clearly displayed and copies are available to take away. They should also review their policy to ensure it includes the pathway for NHS customers.

# Appendix: visit checklist





## Right for Everyone Project Opticians Visit Checklist

Name of opticians:

Date of visit:

Name of visitors:

**On arrival**






Is it easy to get into the opticians?  
For example is there an automatic door, steps, clutter round the door.






Are the signs outside and inside clear and helpful?




Is there space to get a wheelchair or buggy around?



Comments about getting in, signs and space:




**Introductions—things to say on arrival:**

Hello my name is....

I am from Healthwatch Lambeth.


I am here to do an Enter and View visit.

I have an appointment.





**Booking in**

How do you book in? Who books you in?



Is booking in easy or hard?






**Questions for when you book in**



**Ask the green questions.**

What is the person who books you in like? Choose some words in the box:


friendly	rude	smiles	helpful
cheerful	unfriendly	kind	listens
unkind	respectful	looks at me	unhelpful
does not listen	thoughtful		
patient	rushes me		professional




# Appendix: visit checklist



 **In the waiting area**


 Is the information on the walls helpful for you? 


Please say why, for example, too many posters, helpful pictures, writing too small, hard words.





  Does the optometrist (person who does eye tests) come to collect you? 

 Did you have to wait a long time? 


 How long?



 Is there anything that made your waiting time good or bad? For example music, crowds, noise, plants.

 **Questions for the optometrist** (someone who does the eye test)  
*Ask the blue questions.*

 **Questions for the dispensing optician** (someone who helps you choose glasses)  
*Ask the pink questions.*

**After the visit**

 Were you given any information during your visit today? If yes, what was it? Please include it with your checklist.

 Overall, were the answers to your questions helpful? 

Would you want to use this opticians? Why?



**Healthwatch Lambeth**

336 Brixton Road  
London, SW9 7AA

Tel 020 7274 8522  
Text 07545 211 283

[info@healthwatchlambeth.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchlambeth.org.uk)

[www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/enterandview](http://www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/enterandview)

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