

# Healthwatch Lewisham Intelligence Report



August 2019 - February 2020

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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, what they feel could be improved and share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about provision in their area. We have the power to ensure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services.

As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage organisations to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

Our intelligence report highlights the key findings and themes that emerged from the experiences Lewisham residents shared with us, during **August 2019- February 2020**.

**Speak up for better care**

We all love the NHS, but it can't improve without your help. Take five minutes and share your views with Healthwatch to help make care better for you, the people you love, and your community. It's that simple.

Healthwatch exists to make care better for you. We do this by listening to your experiences of health services and working with the NHS to make the changes you want to see. Together we can improve care for everyone.

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## Targeted Feedback

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

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

## GP Extended Access Service



Residents regularly tell us that GP appointments are difficult to access. In 2019, we carried out three visits to the GP Extended Access (GPEA) Service, which has been created to make more appointments available in Lewisham.

The Enter and View visits gave us the chance to understand patients' experiences of the service provided by One Health Lewisham and whether it was helping to improve access for residents.

We were impressed with the service provided at the GPEA service. The availability of additional GP and nurse

appointments was highly valued by patients who were especially grateful to be seen on the same day.

### **'Without this service I would have gone to A&E.'** (Patient)

Patients praised the quality of the treatment from the health professionals' and felt it met their needs. All patients we spoke to felt that they were treated with dignity and respect.

The service has an important role in helping to improve the quality of primary care. Staff told us that the GPEA was an enjoyable place to work and nurses praised their team's network.

### **'It is a service the community badly needed.'** (Staff member)

Through observation and interview, we felt improvements could be made to information available, signage, communication, referrals, identification of staff and the environment. We were concerned that the layout of the service impacted on the functionality of the service.

### Summarised Recommendations

1. Raise awareness of the service and provide patients with more information prior to their appointments.
2. Reminders or relevant training could be given to staff on how to respond to certain circumstances and ensure patients are safely and privately informed about changes of appointments or updates.
3. Further training should be provided to front-line staff to ensure that the criteria for GPEA appointments is clearly understood. Additionally, a small 'crib sheet' could be developed to support receptionists' referrals to the service.
4. A few practical changes could be made to the GPEA service to create a more dementia friendly environment including the use of images alongside text, labelling of rooms and a clock.
5. Staff following a uniform policy and the names of clinicians being added to consultation room doors with accompanying photos would make it easier for patients to identify the different staff members and which room their appointment is in.

Following our report, One Health Lewisham have agreed to implement the majority of our recommendations. For example, names and pictures will now be put on the doors in the service to improve identification of staff for patients.

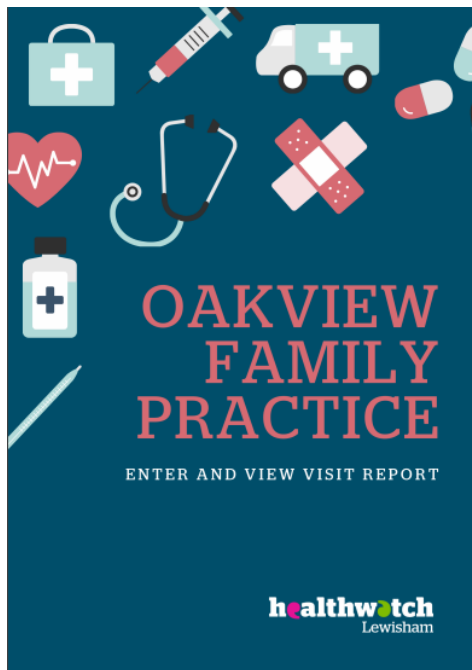
The full report can be found on the Healthwatch Lewisham website:

<https://www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Enter-and-View-Visit-Report-GPEA-Service.pdf>

**Take five minutes to  
share your views and  
make care better for you  
and the people you love.**



## Oakview Family Practice



In December 2019, we carried out three Enter and View visits at the Oakview Family Practice. The purpose of our visits stems from our priorities and our intelligence. One of our priorities for 2019/20 is access to services. We continually receive feedback that patients in Lewisham face difficulties accessing GP appointments.

The “GP Patient Survey 2019” found that Oakview Family Practice is the number one rated service in Lewisham and received the highest rating for access. The Enter and View visits to Oakview Family Practice allowed the opportunity to observe a service that patients rate highly for access and provide a case study to other local GP practices.

We were very impressed with the service provided at Oakview Family Practice. Staff, patients and family members all highly valued the role the practice has in Downham’s community. Patients praised the kind, caring and helpful approach of staff as well as the quality of advice and care. (especially from the practice founder and chief doctor, Dr Tattersfield)

**“10/10. The best service. Only booked an appointment three hours ago and got one today. I was ill the other day; I was coughing in reception. Dr Tattersfield intervened and got me an appointment.” (Patient)**

80% of patients evaluated access to appointments as “Very Good” or “Good”, they particularly praised the availability of emergency appointments. Some commented that advance appointments can be more difficult to book but understood the demand.

All patients we spoke to felt they were treated with dignity, respect and felt listened to. The practice was observed to be extremely clean and staff were professional and caring. Staff had worked at the practice for a long time and enjoyed their work, which was reflected in the service provided. Patients were very grateful the service exists.

**“They know your name and are friendly. You are a person not a number.” (Patient)**

After visiting the service, we felt some minor improvements could be made to the information available, signage, the environment, identification of staff and communication.

## Summary of Recommendations

1. Provision of a sign to indicate the sign in procedure and give patients the option of speaking to a receptionist in an area with greater privacy.
2. The disabled toilet does not have a wheelchair sign on the door. It is recommended that one is added to make it clear this toilet is available for wheelchair users.
3. The practice has a very useful page on its website, identifying staff who work there and displays pictures of them. We would recommend replicating this in the practice.
4. If the service is running behind schedule, patients would appreciate an update from the reception team on how long they can expect to wait.
5. To make it easier for patients to navigate, and for the practice staff to update information, it is recommended that display boards are categorised and headings are used.

In response to our report, the GP surgery have committed to implementing the changes to ensure the disabled toilet is more accessible. The content of their notice boards will be also re-arranged to resemble our suggested layout which will make it easier for patients to digest information.

From visiting Oakview Family Practice it was clear to see that the service is beloved and considered to be a key part of the local community.

The full report can be found on the Healthwatch Lewisham website.

<https://www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Oakview-Family-Practice-Enter-and-View-Visit-Report.pdf>

Do health and  
care services  
know what  
you really  
think?



## Looking after your mental health - LBL Big Health Day

Last year we teamed up with our Healthwatch colleagues in Bexley and Greenwich to be part of the first ever joint Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham Learning Disability Big Health Day. The event gave people with learning disabilities the chance to learn more about cancer and get involved in workshops, mini-health checks and dance classes.



During the Big Health Day, we spoke to over 50 people about their understanding of mental health and experiences of local services. Their views were gathered via a survey and focus group which covered mindfulness and mental health.

We recognise that participants had a range of different disabilities and the feedback we were given, and our analysis of this information, cannot be generalised to a wider group of people with learning disabilities.

From our findings we learnt that most people were happy with the local health services they use, however this was not unanimous with several people finding services difficult to access and therefore not meeting their needs. Many of the residents with learning disabilities told us they experience poor mental health and seeing their GP was the main source of support when feeling low.

Taking part in leisure or fun activities was considered the main method to help maintain good mental health. Staying both mentally and physically healthy was essential and the people we spoke to would value being supported in making healthier life choices. This includes receiving more accessible information on how to stay healthy and the availability of local leisure and volunteering opportunities.

When asked if they had a message they wanted to share with services, participants told us that access to services needs to be improved. They shared frustration at struggling to book appointments, the long waits for assessments and lack of support for families. Poor communication was also raised as an issue with people reiterating that there is a lack of understanding from service providers; being able to see the same clinician was incredibly important as they didn't always feel understood by new doctors.

### Summary of Recommendations

1. Encourage local mental health services in all boroughs to organise events / develop easy read materials that raise awareness about mental health for people with learning disabilities
2. Commissioning of further research projects looking to explore the experiences of people with learning disabilities and their mental health.
3. Ensure continuity of care for people with learning disabilities, seeing the same health professional can create a more relaxing environment for patients.

The full report can be found on the Healthwatch Lewisham website.

<https://www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Joint-Healthwatch-Big-Health-Day-report.pdf>



## Reading for Wellbeing



Last year, residents told us that under the NHS Long Term Plan they would like better access to trustworthy information about health and wellbeing issues. As part of the NHS approach to help people improve their lifestyle, libraries aim to provide reliable information to encourage residents to stay well.

Our research project aimed to raise awareness of libraries' role in providing easier ways to find health information, focusing on the Reading Well project. Reading Well is a scheme that offers fiction and non-fiction books which can help people to understand and manage their health. The resources offer practical and emotional support for people as well as their carers, friends and families.

During our project, we carried out a survey to understand how people find information about healthy lifestyles, healthy eating and exercise. Over 50% of respondents primarily use the internet to get information, with only 4% currently accessing library resources and therefore being unaware of the Reading Well scheme.

We carried out seven mystery shops to Lewisham libraries to see how easy someone could learn about the scheme. We found that most libraries provided clear and easy to read health displays. Staff were helpful, friendly and confident in explaining where health and wellbeing books can be found. However, an increased awareness of Reading Well amongst the library staff and volunteers would help direct people to the resources and books available as part of the scheme.

Good Practice	Areas for Improvement
Health displays and Reading Well displays including printed leaflets and books with "Reading Well" stickers on the front covers.	Training for staff to increase their confidence signposting customers to health and wellbeing resources.
Film displays for those who do not enjoy reading or cannot read	Distinction between sections for children and young people, and for adults
Helpful and friendly staff, confident in explaining where health and wellbeing books can be found, online resources and the Reading Well scheme	Recognition that both fiction and non-fiction books can be used as resources for health and wellbeing

## Summary of Recommendations

1. Raised awareness and training of paid and unpaid staff about the Reading Well scheme and resources available would be beneficial.
2. Librarians should be trained on all signs/words that indicate a person is talking about mental health
3. Clear distinctions between displays for children and young people and adults
4. Availability of the Reading Well scheme in schools would be helpful to young people.

Building on the good practice found in local libraries, we felt it would be useful for librarians to be trained on all signs/words that indicate that a person is talking about their mental health. This would allow staff to feel confident when signposting to appropriate resources. We created a poster to help staff and volunteers' direct residents to the Reading Well scheme.

We believe that the scheme is a fantastic initiative and more work needs to be done to raise awareness in the London Borough of Lewisham.

The full report can be found on the Healthwatch Lewisham website:

[https://www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Reading-Well\\_HW-Lewisham-report.pdf](https://www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Reading-Well_HW-Lewisham-report.pdf)



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## Lewisham Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service

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

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

From speaking with clients, we recognised the following issues for Lewisham residents during August 2019 to February 2020.

- Difficulties with patient transport
- Some residents wanted to challenge their sectioning under the Mental Health Act
- Early discharge from hospital
- Quality of treatment at hospital/ poor aftercare
- Difficulties with NHS Continuing Healthcare funding
- Issues with repeat prescriptions

### Making a difference in the community



In early 2020, our advocacy contacted University Hospital Lewisham after receiving a number of complaints that patients were having blood samples taken in the waiting room at the Accident and Emergency Department. This practice was really unpopular because patients felt their privacy was being invaded.

After raising the issue with Lewisham and Greenwich NHS

Trust, they informed us that our intelligence had supported their business plan to convert a linen room into an appropriate space for blood tests which has now been approved.

## Feature Case Study

### Problem



Mr M had been receiving renal dialysis as an out-patient at a local hospital for 13 years because he was unsuitable for a renal transplant. He contacted our advocacy service because he sometimes found that he was not receiving the full amount of time on the dialysis machines, as the nurses were very busy.

As he knew a considerable amount about his life-threatening condition, he was very anxious about this practice.

He was also concerned that new patients did not appreciate how damaging this practice could be to their health.

### Actions

Many patients with long standing conditions can be very challenging to care for, the Advocate was mindful that a complaint should not compromise Mr M's relationship with the dialysis staff. When drafting the complaint they ensured that the letter acknowledged the care that Mr M had received and acknowledged that the service was clearly understaffed. The client letter requested that the complaint be used as a tool to lobby for increased funding for the service.

### Outcome

The provider letter displayed a very thorough investigation into the service. The investigation showed that there were many issues with the service and that delays in transport meant that if Mr M was late for his therapy slot, then sometimes his treatment had to be cut short.

In response to the complaint, special measures were introduced to care for Mr M. There was also an acknowledgement that the complaint had been used to successfully obtain increased funding and as a direct result, extra nursing staff would be recruited.

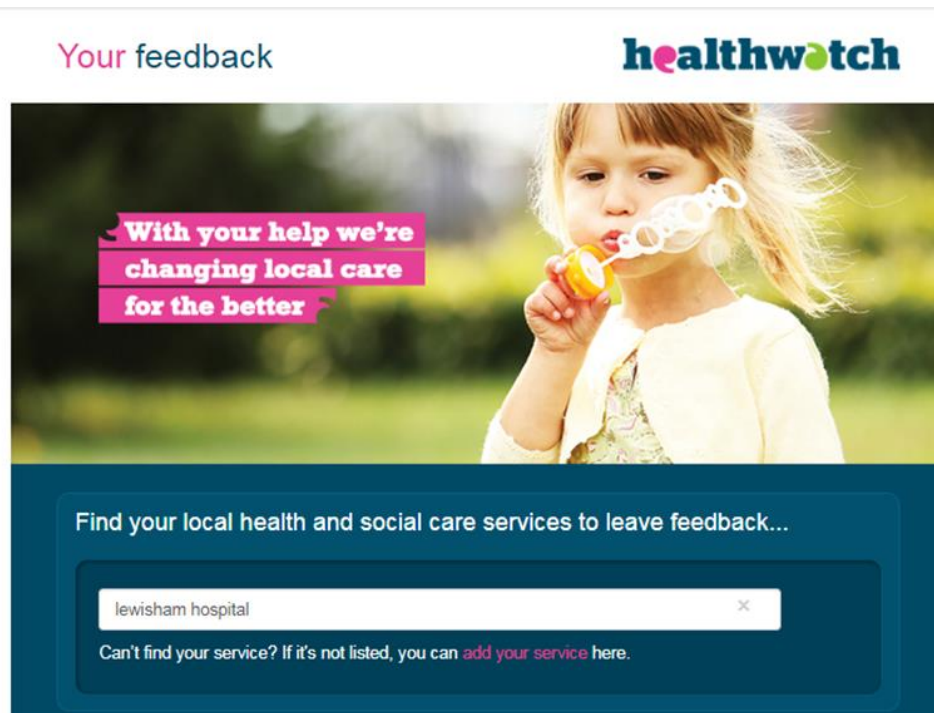
## General Engagement

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

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

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

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



To help patients share a detailed account of their patient story, we encourage them to rate, where applicable, different aspects of their experience. They can give feedback on cleanliness, staff attitudes, waiting time, treatment explanation, quality of care and quality of food. We chose these themes by analysing our data and identifying the common issues highlighted by users.

All comments gathered through our hub engagement are inputted into the feedback system. The Feedback Centre and our hubs attributed for 90% of all comments.

## Analysis of Patient Stories

From August 2019 to February 2020, we received **487** individual comments specifically related to local health and care services. These reviews encompassed 62 different services in Lewisham or surrounding boroughs.

From our data, we found that 52% of all patient stories were positive and 26% were negative. 22% of experiences were mixed which represents a decrease of 8% when compared to our last intelligence report which covered February 2019-July 2019. The drop in the amount of mixed feedback does not follow the pattern of recent reports, this could be the result of a rise in positive experiences shared, as well as a change in the algorithms we use to analyse the data.

68% of respondents that gave an opinion were likely or very likely to recommend the service that they were reviewing, with 19% unlikely or very unlikely to do so. Analysis of the reviews showed that the most-used positive word was 'good', and the most used negative word was 'poor'.

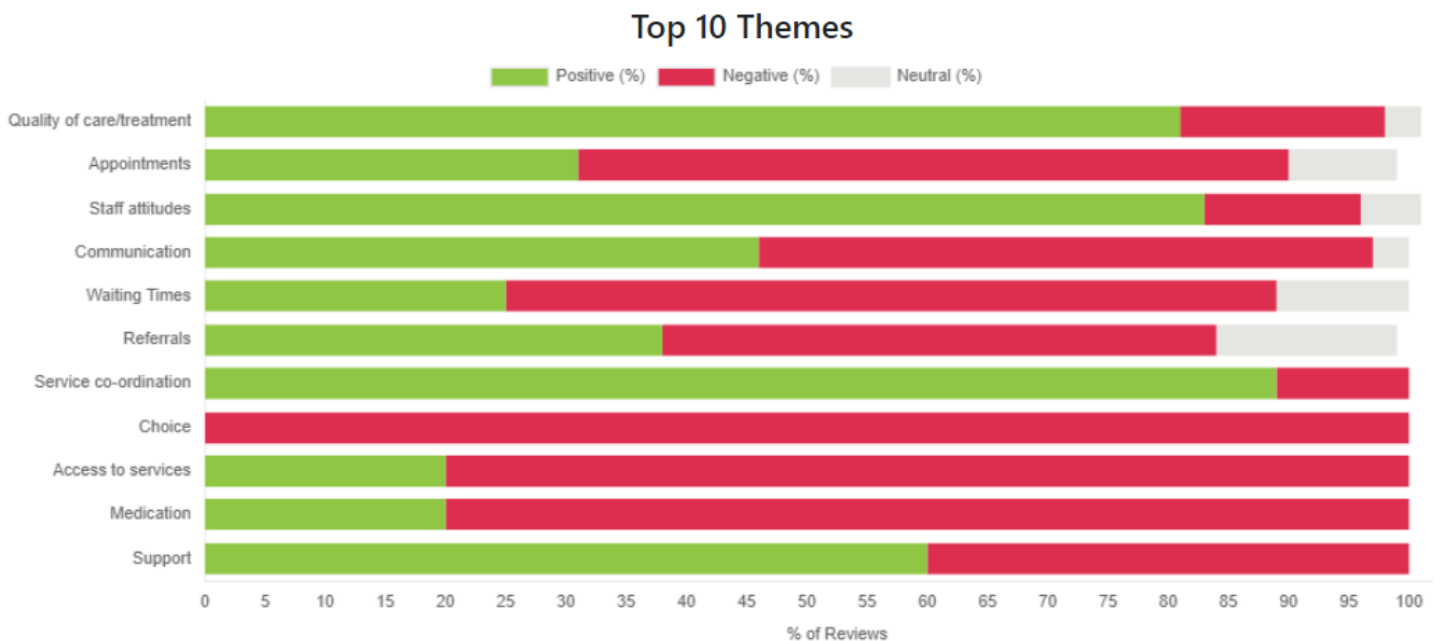


Residents continue to praise local services for providing a high level of care and treatment but are encountering difficulties accessing services within a preferred timeframe. For example, 83% of comments relating to quality of care/treatment and 74% about staff attitudes were positive. Whilst 60% about appointments were negative. However, it should be noted that this represents a 11% decrease in the number of reviews that criticise the appointment process.

Patients still struggle to access timely appointments at GP practices and hospitals in the borough. Similarly, people are unhappy with the amount of time they are having to wait either to be seen at an appointment, or on a waiting list for treatment at a hospital. Patients generally praised the quality of appointments and were appreciative of quick referrals, however they would prefer to see the same doctor to ensure continuity of care.

In regard to communication, patients had mixed experiences with local health services. 54% of comments were negative in comparison to 44% positive. People cited a lack of communication around appointments at hospitals, either due to last minute cancellations or because they had to chase up hospitals after not receiving confirmation letters. The majority of patients were appreciative of healthcare staff and felt they provided helpful advice and information around treatment procedures.

The chart below provides a breakdown of the top 10 themes from the feedback.



GP practices received the highest number of reviews in our Feedback Centre between August 2019 and February 2019. They made up 66% of all comments, with 23% relating to hospital services. This is a regular trend we find in all of our intelligence reports. Despite pharmacies, dentists and opticians being accessed regularly by the local population, we found that people are less likely to share their views of these services unless a negative experience prompts them.



Experiences of children and young people’s services (5%) primarily makes up the rest of the collected feedback. We regularly carry out hubs at Kaleidoscope which is a dedicated health centre for children and young people. The engagement provides us with the opportunity to hear the experiences of parents.

The services within Kaleidoscope continue to be predominantly praised by residents, although there has been a reduction in positive reviews. The service receiving a combined rating of the 3.75 out of 5 stars after being reviewed by 24 people compared to 4.15 stars in our last report. Despite the lower rating, the staff at Kaleidoscope are still considered to be kind, helpful and offer a high level of care. 100% of all comments relating to “quality of treatment” and “staff attitudes” were favourable.

“Fantastic care from the paediatrician and physio teams is second to none. Once they realise something is wrong, they make the right referral straight away. Communication is brilliant and are really involved in the decision making around my daughter. Gave us an appointment the next week - so prompt.”

Residents were impressed with the communication from the different services in Kaleidoscope, they thought the staff provided clear explanations about what support their children needed and how the service could help.

“The therapist in the Speech and Language Department is really good. I couldn't ask for a better therapist. She knows my son and can talk about other things such as development.”

Difficulty accessing services was raised as an issue by several parents, for example one father highlighted the long waiting time to access the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). He said he had been unsuccessfully trying to get his daughter an appointment for 18 months. Two parents felt that in addition to the waiting times being excessive; that there had not been enough information about Autism Spectrum Disorder. Furthermore, it should be noted that a couple of parents had problems getting in contact with departments and were disappointed that either no-one answered their calls, or the phone line was engaged.



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local NHS  
services better**

**what**  
would you do?



## Feedback about GP services

From August to February we gathered **323** reviews about local primary care services. Feedback analysis shows that 54% of comments about Lewisham GPs were positive, which represents a significant increase when compared to data collated in our last intelligence report. 26% were negative with the remaining 20% being mixed. The change can be attributed patients sharing a greater number of stories praising the level of treatment they received from their GP or nurse. For example, 85% of 162 comments highlighting “quality of treatment” were favourable.

**“Lewisham Medical Centre is WONDERFUL! Years and years of fantastic advice and care.” (Lewisham Medical Centre)**

The majority of patients told us they appreciated the advice and explanations given by the clinicians. They explained that they tended to feel reassured after their appointments, even if the doctors were not able to explicitly tell them what was wrong. On the whole, patients felt that staff were responsive to their needs and valued being given quick referrals to hospital services or the GP Extended Access Service when necessary. The referral process for blood tests was considered efficient and seamless, especially for appointments at South Lewisham Group Practice. Although it should be recognised that not all residents shared this view, with some being unhappy at never receiving referrals.



From analysing our data, we learnt that most residents praised the attitudes of clinicians at their GP practices. They found them to be friendly, approachable and caring. Doctors and nurses were also considered to be professional and understanding, patients appreciated being listened to and receiving the full attention of staff.

**“Staff give me info and pictures to help me understand. They are very friendly and have known me for a long time.” (Honor Oak Group Practice)**

However, two patients felt that doctors could be more empathetic and have better understanding of mental health issues. They left their appointments not feeling supported and unsure whether they should seek further help. This was also an issue raised during our NHS Long Term Plan engagement carried out in summer 2019.

Some patients shared frustrations about receptionists, finding them to be rude, unhelpful or not properly listening to them. We recognise that this criticism is largely the result of people being irritated by being unable to access the GP service or book a convenient appointment. Receptionists are the front-line staff

who are tasked with informing patients about the lack of appointment availability which can lead them to being personally criticised. But we do believe that it would be useful to offer customer service training or refresher training to all front-line staff.

Although there has been a slight reduction in the number of negative comments, access to appointments remains a major issue for Lewisham residents. 60% of the reviews that discussed booking appointments, highlighted unsatisfactory waiting times. Patients were having to wait up to two weeks to be seen by a doctor for a “routine” appointment. In certain circumstances, people were prepared to wait this length of time if they could guarantee being seen by a doctor of their choice. Continuity of care is incredibly important for Lewisham residents because they have strong and trusting relationships with health professionals.

However, patients were typically facing long waits just to access the service, unless they were booking appointments for their children.

“Hard to get appointments. Can only get them if I ask for an emergency appointment for my child. Staff are friendly and communicate with my son well, shame that it’s so hard to get appointments.” (South Lewisham Group Practice)

“Excellent care if you can access it. Often impossible to get a consultation with named GP (or for that matter, any GP or the nurse practitioner)” (Rushey Green Group Practice)



Despite ringing at 8am, residents often found phone lines to be constantly engaged and by the time they were connected to a receptionist, there were no longer any same-day appointments available. The process of booking appointments online was considered easier, but only if you were prepared to wait a week, as there was limited availability of same-day or next-day appointments. Some patients

expressed concerns that their GP practices were no longer offering appointments at the reception desk and that this decision would restrict their access because they didn’t know how to use Patient Access.

Woodlands Health Centre drop-in appointment clinic is valued by its local community because it is enabling people to see a health professional quicker than alternative methods. We recommend that this might be an approach that other GP practices adopt because there is evidence that patients still value this method of booking appointments.

“Before, getting an appointment would be about two weeks using the phone or online. Now with the walk-in service on a Tuesday, can now turn up at 8am, I tend to use this system, always get an appointment, so it works.” (Woodlands Health Centre)

It should be noted that lack of access to appointments does not apply to all GP practices across Lewisham, for example, Oakview Family Practice consistently scores highly for access.

We received mixed reviews regarding waiting times at GP practices. From looking at the data it appears that there was a lack of consistency relating to the running time of services. Those who were unhappy with waiting times told us that it was annoying if it took over 20 minutes to speak with a clinician. On the other hand, other residents explained that they understood the pressures on the NHS and did not mind waiting if it meant they received a good service.

Healthwatch Lewisham regularly holds Engagement Hubs at South Lewisham Group Practice. Patients told us that they find it difficult to book to appointments at a time convenient for them. But once they manage to access the service, they are extremely satisfied with the level of care and treatment they receive. As mentioned in our last intelligence report, the wide range of services available at the practice such as the pharmacy, diabetes clinic, chiroprapist and health visitors are valued by Lewisham residents. The practice isn't just seen as a health service, it is considered a community hub.

“Very happy with quality of service for me and my 4 children. From pregnancy to childbirth, losing husband - they really supported me during bereavement - received personalised response with GP doing home visits and organising timely intervention and surgery. Fantastic service.” (South Lewisham Group Practice)

The patient stories from South Lewisham Group Practice match the experiences we hear across the borough and show that work still needs to be done to improve access in Lewisham.



## Feedback about University Hospital Lewisham



The majority of comments about secondary care services related to University Hospital Lewisham. **104** patients gave the hospital a combined rating of 3.69 stars out of 5, which is a slight increase when compared to our last intelligence report. 52% of experiences were positive in comparison to 20% negative and 28% mixed.

The two main positive themes highlighted by patients were quality of treatment/ care and staff attitudes. This is a recurring theme in all of our intelligence reports, we have found that people tend to factor in the attitudes of staff when determining the quality of a service. Nearly 80% of reviews that discussed these themes were positive.

Despite only hearing a small number of experiences regarding the Cancer services, patients were unanimous about the fantastic treatment they received and thanked them for all the support from their diagnosis to being given the all clear. They also singled out the impressive hygiene standards and regular cleaning of the ward.

**“I love Lewisham Hospital they were so supportive and caring throughout my experience with cancer. Cannot thank the doctors and nurses enough. Kept me informed during the whole process and I really do now believe they were crucial to my 'all clear' diagnosis. Always was able to get appointments and was regularly checked up on.” (Cancer services)**

24% of all reviews about University Hospital Lewisham related to the Accident and Emergency department. The experiences of service users tended to be mixed, although nearly everyone felt that they received a high level of treatment and found nurses to be kind, caring and reassuring.

**“Thank you very much for your support. My daughter had her finger broken. The staff were kind, the doctor saw her within 1 hour.” (Accident and Emergency Department)**

Patients opinions differed when it came to waiting times and communication. From our data, we can establish that most patients needed to wait at least two hours to be seen by a clinician, with five people exceeding the four-hour waiting time target. The service users who experienced long waits thought they could have received more communication from staff and would have appreciated regular updates.

“Patients go there with emergencies and need to be seen quick. Prioritisation should be improved. More staff are needed to see people who are waiting and need care. I am not happy with the quality. I wanted to be seen by a specialist but was referred back to a GP.” **(Accident and Emergency Department)**

“Went on Friday morning (7:45) with severe back pain. Was in and out within two hours which included an x-ray and given necessary medication. Got to give them props! I was well impressed! It wasn't crowded and was pretty quiet.”

**(Accident and Emergency Department)**



The reviews about the Accident and Emergency department indicate that patients encounter a wide variance when using UHL which is a reoccurring issue found in our intelligence reports. The rest of our patient stories rather than being specific to certain departments encompassed a wide range of different wards and departments across the hospital.

Midwives within the maternity department were singled out for being caring, knowledgeable and reassuring. The mothers who spoke to us thanked them for explaining information in a way that was easy to understand.

“ I spent 6 days at the hospital because I experienced some complications giving birth. Midwives were amazing, made time for me and my family. Were stretched for resources but made up for this in care. I had to wait 5 hours for room in labour ward. Amazing level of care, toast made at 3am - little things make a big difference.” **(Maternity)**

Patients shared mixed experiences about communication within the hospital. The majority of service users felt that staff were comprehensive in providing information and advice about their condition, as well as outlining the next steps in their treatment. Negative experiences related to communication often were about people being frustrated with the lack of information relating to their appointments. The limited contact meant they had to chase up the hospital to see whether an appointment had been confirmed.

Access to the Orthopaedics Department was raised as an issue by three patients who either had experienced cancellations or had to wait an extended period on a waiting list.

“I need a hip replacement. I wasn't able to be seen due to awful admin! 5 months wait - then appointment cancelled. Useless” **(Orthopaedics)**

We regularly carry out Engagement Hubs at University Hospital Lewisham which provides us with the opportunity to speak with a small group of people who use the patient transport service. Overall, patients were happy with the service provided by G4S, they considered the process of travelling from their house to hospital and vice versa to be efficient. However, they did raise concerns about the length of time it took to be taken to their appointments and wanted to receive additional updates from the patient transport team.

Analysis of our data suggests that service users of University Hospital Lewisham continue to receive a high level of care and treatment across the different departments. However, we must recognise that there is a wide variance in experiences when it comes to waiting times and communication. Healthwatch Lewisham suggests that future efforts should be focused on reducing waiting times within the service and ensuring patients receive better communication around appointments.

**Thank you**

Your views helped implement video consultations at every GP in south east London

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## Summary

- Many residents with learning disabilities told us they experience poor mental health and seeing their GP was the main source of support when feeling low.
- Staying both mentally and physically healthy was essential people with learning disabilities would value being supported in making healthier life choices.
- People with learning disabilities believe that there is a lack of understanding from service providers about their condition; being able to see the same clinician was incredibly important as they didn't always feel understood by new doctors.
- Patients valued the role Oakview Family Practice has in Downham's community. In particular, patients praised the kind, caring and helpful approach of staff, as well as the quality of advice and care.
- 80% of patients at Oakview Family Practice rated access to appointments as "Very Good" or "Good", they particularly appreciated the availability of emergency appointments.
- Healthwatch Lewisham staff were impressed with the service provided at the GP Extended Access (GPEA) service. The availability of additional GP and nurse appointments was highly regarded by patients who were especially grateful to be seen on the same day.
- Patients praised the quality of the treatment from the health professionals' at the GPEA service and felt it met their needs.
- We felt minor improvements could be made to information available, signage, communication, referrals, identification of staff and the environment at the GPEA service.
- Most libraries in Lewisham provide clear and easy to read health displays. Staff were helpful, friendly and confident in explaining where health and wellbeing books can be found.
- An increased awareness of the Reading Well scheme amongst the library staff and volunteers would help direct people to the resources and books available as part of the scheme. We would also encourage the Clinical Commissioning Group to help promote the scheme to clinicians.
- After raising the issue of blood samples being taken in the A&E waiting room, we were informed by Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust that our intelligence supported their business plan to convert a linen room into an appropriate space for blood tests which has now been approved.

- Residents continue to praise local services for providing a high level of care and treatment but are encountering difficulties accessing health services within a preferred timeframe.
- A high percentage of patients were having to wait up to two weeks to be seen by a doctor for a “routine” appointment. In certain circumstances, people were prepared to wait this length of time if they could guarantee being seen by a doctor of their choice.
- The majority of patients told us they appreciated the advice and explanations given by the clinicians at their GP practice. They explained that they felt reassured after their appointments, even if the doctors were not able to explicitly tell them what was wrong.
- Woodlands Health Centre drop-in appointment clinic is valued by its local community because it is enabling people to see a health professional quicker than alternative methods.
- Patients at University Hospital Lewisham continue to praise the quality of treatment and care they receive across the hospital.
- There remains a wide variance in patient experience when it comes to waiting times and communication, which was also evident in the reviews of the Accident and Emergency Department.

<b>Recurring Issues</b>
• Access to GP appointments
• Limited learning disability awareness amongst health professionals
• Waiting times within University Hospital Lewisham
• Lack of communication around hospital appointments



## Recommendations

1. Encourage local mental health services in all boroughs to organise events / develop easy read materials that raise awareness about mental health for people with learning disabilities.
2. Ensure continuity of care for people with learning disabilities, seeing the same health professional can create a more relaxing environment for patients.
3. Commissioning of further research projects looking to explore the experiences of people with learning disabilities and their mental health.
4. Raise awareness of the GPEA service and provide patients with more information prior to their appointments.
5. Further training should be provided to front-line staff to ensure that the criteria for GPEA appointments is clearly understood. Additionally, a small 'crib sheet' could be developed to support receptionists' referrals to the service.
6. GPEA staff should follow a uniform policy. The names of clinicians being added to consultation room doors with accompanying photos would make it easier for patients to identify the different staff members and which room their appointment is in.
7. Raised awareness and training of paid and unpaid library staff about the Reading Well scheme and resources available would be valuable to residents. We would encourage Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group to actively promote the scheme amongst clinicians in GP practices.
8. Librarians should be trained on all signs/words that indicate a person is talking about mental health.
9. Availability of the Reading Well scheme in schools would be helpful to young people.
10. Provide GP receptionists with customer service training to support them when having difficult conversations about appointments.
11. GP surgeries could assess whether there is scope and value in offering a drop-in appointment clinic.
12. Improve communication around appointments at University Hospital Lewisham. Ensure several reminders in various formats are sent to patients informing them of their appointment date and time.

## Examples of Positive Patient Stories relating to GPs

“For us it's good. If we are sick at the weekend, we can make and get appointments. No bad doctors - I love my surgery! Appointments straight away!” **(South Lewisham Group Practice)**

“Appointments can be made quickly. Dr Sackey is a very good doctor, has helped me with numerous problems. Very nice person.” **(Woolstone Medical Centre)**

“Been here for 30 years, weirdly practice moved when we did. Great refurbishment - now there is air conditioning. It was difficult, but easier now I have got my head around the patient access system - you just have to book at the right time. Phoned up this morning, got a same-day appointment. Doctor is on the ball; she knows my history” **(Woodlands Medical Centre)**

“I am very happy with my GP; he listens, is caring and acts on your concerns.” **(Hilly Fields Medical Centre)**

“Very convenient for me - only 5-6 mins away from my house, been there for 26 years. Get to see the same doctor, unless he goes on holiday. Always have to ask for my specific doctor to see them. Much easier to get appointments - always get an appointment during the week. I always find him patient and never rushes me. He communicates effectively. We have built a strong doctor/patient relationship since I had my son.” **(Lee Road Surgery)**

“I am well-looked-after by my doctor. Yearly eye check and get my feet checked regularly every few months and see the dentist regularly. If there is ever an issue, I or they, tell me. They always tell me off about my shoes. Give reminders about my diabetes checks. Everything is in order. The system is quite good for my needs. Had a full blood check and everything went well.” **(South Lewisham Group Practice)**

“Very good experience. I was cared for and supported by my GP. It was easy to book appointments.” **(Sydenham Green Group Practice)**

“No complaints - accommodating to accessing appointments as I work. Good, positive experience - they accommodate needs. Will contact you to fill in cancellations!” **(Bellingham Green Surgery)**

“Overall, I am impressed with all aspects of the clinic. Friendly doctors that send you off as required. Would recommend to others, no problem.” **(Mornington Surgery)**

“I have been lucky enough to see the same doctor each time I visit my surgery. She is always calm and pleasant and she takes the time to listen to me even though I may not communicate very clearly.” **(Lewisham Medical Centre)**

## Examples of Negative Patient Stories relating to GPs

### Appointments

“No matter if you are a CEO or someone with a PHD, the condescending doctors at this practice will treat you like an uneducated child who doesn't understand left from right, refusing to believe that perhaps you know your own body better than they do. They never check your medical history on their system. Patients have to wait 1 month-45 days for an appointment, just to end up with a 15 minute slot for "1 question only" visit. If you have more issues to treat, they force you to book another appointment! It's now been 4 months and none of my issues have been solved.” (Amersham Vale Practice)

“I have arthritis and can never can get an appointment. Used to be good Doctors but they left. Would not recommend to other people at all.” (Torridon Medical Practice)

“Disgusting - can never get an appointment at my surgery. Tried to get an appointment next week after I have had my course of antibiotics - couldn't get an appointment until 28th November (today is 23rd October). Given an appointment for today but can't see the point in going as I'm only half way through my antibiotics.” (Bellingham Green Surgery)

“Months and months trying to get an appointment, then my GP cancelling 6 appointments in a row last minute (or not telling me at all until I turn up), then 5 months of chasing them to send referrals, not sending them to the correct services, not sending the correct information, asking me to 'call around' and chase them up myself, and finally finding out they didn't request the correct funding so the whole process has to be started again. 0 communication between staff, 0 effective communication with other services, and absolutely no regard for patient wellbeing or safety. When raising concerns with my treatment and their practice i've repeatedly been told to 'be patient'.” (Parkview Surgery)

“I've been trying to get an appointment for two days now at the surgery and I cannot get an appointment, I asked to speak to the doctor, the receptionist called back they told me today that they haven't got no callback doctor for me to speak to. I'm not very happy with the service I'm not very well I've got Parkinson disease and some days I cannot make it to the surgery.” (South Lewisham Group Practice)

“Atrocious. Never get through - when you do get through, there are never any appointments.” (St John's Medical Centre)

“Getting appointments on the phone after 8am is really hard, it really shouldn't be. More appointments need to be available for patients.” (Rushey Green Group Practice)

**Other**

“Dreadfully poor service and poor clinical practice - not all GPs are dreadful , indeed some are excellent, but some (one) with a key senior role makes some very poor decisions that influence the overall functioning of the practice.” **(Baring Road Medical Centre)**

“Receptionists at Rushey Green Surgery are rude. Also, booking appointments on the phone can be stressful and hard to get. I would like to see the same doctor as when I see them they are so professional and listen to me.” **(Rushey Green Group Practice)**

“This is the worst surgery in the whole of Lewisham. Can never get anything right. All they do is prescribe more drugs. It's easy to book an appointment however.” **(Chinbrook Surgery)**

“Have high staff turnover so too many locums. Some of them are friendly, there are certain doctors we refuse to see.” **(Woolstone Medical Centre)**

“Terrible - don't have enough doctors. Can't get appointments - changed policy so you can't book on the day in person. Never waited less than 20 mins. If you are 5 mins late, they don't want to see you. One of the worst things that could happen is that they are merging with Brockley Road - will never get an appointment. **(Hilly Fields Medical Centre)**

“Bit of a shambles. All a mess. There was a problem with my prescription. It took 7 days for me to get a repeat prescription. They have adopted a different system which had not updated my records. Also took 3 months for blood test results!” **(Sydenham Green Group practice)**

“Stressed and rude receptionist, Dr who was unsympathetic and stressed, phone line never works, awful building. I literally dread going there.” **(New Cross Health Centre)**

## Examples of Positive Patient Stories relating to University Hospital Lewisham

“Excellent care for hysterectomy. Mum had good cancer care. Very good hygiene regime on the wards.” **(Cancer services)**

“Very good, transport arrived on time and appointment on time. Very satisfactory meeting with doctor. Wait for 15 mins at the time.” **(Respiratory Medicine)**

“Dr Baker - chest clinic - very kind, all very nice, easy to get appointments. They provide me with lots of useful information about my condition.” **(Nephrology)**

“Doctors and nurses are lovely in the children services, made my daughter feel so comfortable during what could have easily been a scary experience.” **(Children services)**

“Outpatients for surgery on stomach. Very good experience. They helped me with everything. Did a lot of tests to find out what was my medical issue. They are not just good - they are very good.” **(Outpatients)**

“The physiotherapist was very helpful in explaining what the exercises were, and getting me to show what I was supposed to be doing, with any corrections for positioning my leg to get the best possible result from the treatment. I was given the guide to follow - in pictures - and the required number of actions to get the optimum results.” **(Physiotherapy)**

“I find staff in the Cardiology appointment were friendly, welcoming and helpful” **(Cardiology)**

“Went to A&E twice last year, found it excellent. I was there for 5 hours, but I was prepared. Very thoughtful and very careful people. Communication - several times people checked on me to see if I was alright.” **(Accident and Emergency)**

“I've been coming here for 10 years. 2-3 years ago there have been many improvements including the staff being more open and friendly.” **(Rheumatology)**

“I had my head stitched, the nurses and doctors were great.” **(Accident and Emergency)**

“Outstanding. Had a hearing test. Prompt and diagnosed quickly.” **(Ear,Nose and Throat)**

“Went to my appointment this week. Very happy with my physiotherapist. They are very knowledgeable about my condition and I don't feel fobbed off about my problem with nerve tension. I am given the correct exercises. My condition is getting better.” **(Physiotherapy)**

“Nurses and doctor 5\* service. The majority were caring and friendly. Immediate cleaning of the ward. I was picked up by transport promptly, all and all it was like clockwork.” **(Cancer services)**

## Examples of Negative Patient Stories relating to University Hospital Lewisham

“I waited 6 hours yesterday to be seen for them to tell us we were no longer on the system and they couldn't do nothing, bearing in mind my boyfriend's hand had been bitten by a dog and his hand is seriously injured and needs stitches. But we were told to re-book and wait for another 4 hours, so we left and I dressed it and cleaned it myself, very unprofessional.” **(Accident and Emergency)**

“Currently waiting to be transported to my appointment but have been waiting for over 30 minutes now. Not sure why they haven't taken me. It feels like they have forgotten about me.” **(Patient Transport)**

“I run a club for the elderly and over the last 10 years many of our members have ended in the wards for the elderly in Lewisham Hospital, The main problems seem to be in the lack of general communication to the patients except for basic "orders", the lack of help with food and drink - a lack of humanity that better leadership could improve without financial cost.” **(General)**

“1 hour. Doctors don't always have the information. CT Scan, bad food for diabetic vegetarian.”**(Renal)**

“Unfriendly midwives. Student midwives left to attend to patients independently. Horrible bedside manner. Unprofessional.” **(Maternity)**

“Had an appointment for an X-ray at the hospital, The young lady called me by my first name; I immediately told her that I did not appreciate that. From that moment on she sulked. I'd entered the room where I was told to strip to the waist, she did not offer me a gown. I queried this. She said I did not need one, it was just through the door. The x ray machines were dirty and I felt very uncomfortable with that. Young people should be respectful towards older people.” **(X-ray)**

“I was told by my GP that I needed to visit A&E, so that's what I did. I went to the department and was told to take a seat. When it was my time to see the doctor, he was very rude asking me “What are you doing here, this isn't an emergency!” By this point I had been waiting for two hours and explained that my GP had asked me to come. The doctor reiterated that he couldn't help but didn't tell me what I should do next. In the end I wasn't sure if that was the right place to be and I didn't want to waste anyone's time.” **(Accident and Emergency Department)**

“Very long wait, everything taken so long - each process is followed by a delay. Not always able to get a diagnosis.” **(Orthopaedics)**

## Themes

Top themes about GP services	Positive	Negative	Mixed
Appointments	34%	57%	%
Quality of care/treatment	81%	15%	4%
Staff Attitudes	77%	18%	5%
Communication	46%	46%	8%
Referrals	50%	40%	10%
Waiting Times	30%	50%	20%

Top themes about University Hospital Lewisham	Positive	Negative	Mixed
Quality of care/treatment	80%	17%	4%
Communication	43%	57%	0%
Waiting Times	24%	74%	3%
Staff Attitudes	79%	18%	3%
Appointments	33%	58%	8%

