# GP websites: A report on the quality and content of website information
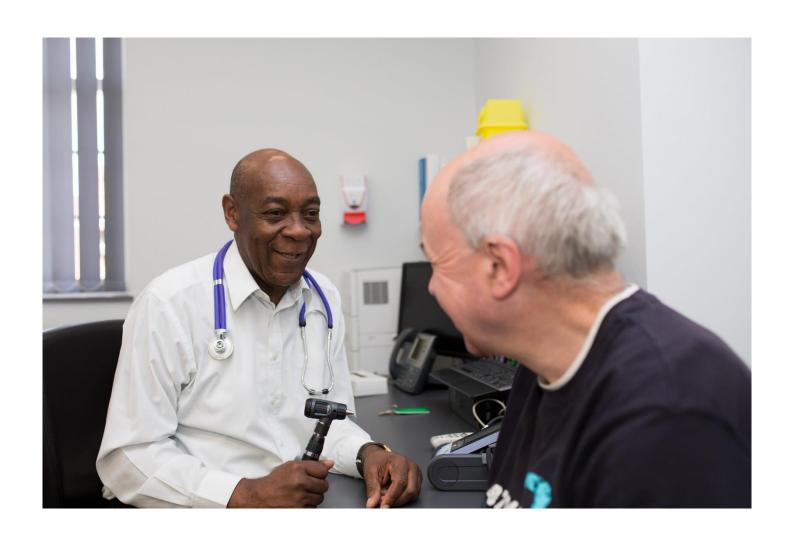


**February 2020**

# Contents

# About Healthwatch Greenwich

Healthwatch Greenwich is one of 152 local Healthwatch organisations established throughout England on 1 April 2013 under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. We have a dual role as consumer champions of users of publicly funded health and social care services for adults and children, and to hold the system to account for how well it designs and delivers services to meet local needs.

We meet these objectives by collecting feedback from Greenwich residents on their experience of using health and social care services, and by conducting focused investigations into areas of concern. We do this by working with patients' groups, local voluntary sector organisations and community groups.



We collect residents' views and experiences through our feedback centre on our website, via social media, emails, and telephone calls, during listening sessions at patient and public service user meetings, outreach events and drop-in sessions at a range of venues across the borough.

We use this insight to work with, influence and encourage, those who pay for services (commissioners) and those who deliver services (providers) to make changes and improvements.

# Introduction

## Why we carried out this review?

We receive regular feedback from residents having difficulty accessing information from their GP surgeries. Many people tell us they can't get same week appointments, and they've not been told about GP access hubs[1]. Residents tell us GP practices don't ask them for feedback on services received, and they're not told how to get more involved by joining Patient Participation Groups[2], or by contacting Healthwatch Greenwich. We've also been told it's difficult to make a complaint because information on the process is not made easily available. Residents who speak English as a second or third language tell us that little information on GP services is available in community languages[3].

The NHS Long Term Plan[4] is increasing the range of digital health tools and services. People can seek health information and support online using digital technology. GP websites should make it easier to access relevant information and encourage greater self-help.



Our review investigates the breadth and level of information available to patients on GP websites and how easy it is to navigate websites to find information.

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[1] Greenwich Health, in partnership with Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group offer four GP access hubs. GP access hubs offer extended access to GP appointments, during the evenings and weekends. It is not a walk-in centre and appointments must be booked via patients existing surgery.

[2] PPGs are usually made up of a group of volunteer patients, the practice manager and one or more of the GPs from the practice, they meet on a regular basis to discuss the services on offer, and how improvements can be made for the benefit of patients and the practice. It is a contractual requirement for all English GP practices to form a patient participation group (PPG) and to make reasonable efforts for this to be representative of the practice population.

[3] We highlighted poor communication and access to information in our GP access report in 2017.

[4] https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/online-version/

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our dedicated volunteers for their support. Much of the initial work on this project was done by a team of highly skilled and dedicated volunteers who gave us substantial amounts of their time. In particular:

- Evelyn Nodame
- Prisca Namukonda
- Nnamdi Onwura

# How we carried out this review?

We obtained an up-to-date list of GP surgeries within the Royal Borough of Greenwich from Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group. This list comprised 35 GP practices. A list of surgeries can be found in the appendices.

Between November and December 2019, we assessed individual practices' websites based on the content and quality of information provided and how easy the information is to find/how user friendly each website is. We wanted to know if the following information or facility is provided, and is easy to find, on each practice website:

- How to join the practice (and if made clear that ID is not required)
- What medical help is available when the practice is closed (Out of Hours)
- Information on Greenwich GP Access Hubs and how to access them
- How to give feedback and comments, can patients leave online feedback
- How to make a complaint
- Information about the Patient Participation Group (PPG) and how to join
- Information about Healthwatch Greenwich and how to contact us
- Website language translation facility and access to interpretors
- Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating and report
- GP Patient Survey rating
- Mobile friendly (can information be easily accessed, and forms completed on a mobile phone)

## Which websites did we assess?

We assessed 31 out of 35 websites.

Of the four websites not included, three were unavailable (or did not have a website) at the time of the audit, but offered links to an NHS summary, which we give a summary of at the end of our report[5]. One surgery did not have a website but offered

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[5] https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp

a link to a franchise page. This website was not included because it was unclear whether the information available was for service users[6].

## Summary of Findings

**Red**: Less than half of websites provide this information.
**Amber**: Half to three-quarters of websites provide this information.
**Green**: More than three-quarters of websites provide this information and it is easy to find.

| | |
|---|---|
| Greenwich CCG & Healthwatch Greenwich flyer on how to join the practice, making clear that ID is not required | 🟥 |
| Information about Healthwatch Greenwich and how to contact us | 🟥 |
| Feedback and comments, ability to leave online feedback | 🟥 |
| Information on how to join PPG and date of next meeting | 🟥 |
| Latest GP Patient Survey results | 🟥 |
| Up-to-date information on Greenwich GP Access Hubs and how to access them | 🟥 |
| Information on how to access interpreters/language line | 🟥 |
| Information on how to access advocacy support to make a complaint | 🟥 |
| Mobile friendly (can information be easily accessed, and forms completed on a mobile phone) | 🟥 |
| Latest CQC rating | 🟧 |
| Ease of navigation | 🟧 |
| Latest CQC report | 🟩 |
| What medical help is available when the practice is closed (NHS 111) | 🟩 |
| How to make a complaint | 🟩 |
| Website language translation facility | 🟩 |

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[6] On the *Who We Are page,* it claimed that the organisation is a large provider of primary care services to the NHS in England.

### Disclaimer

Our role as Healthwatch Greenwich is to offer a service user perspective. On this basis, our assessment of GP websites is guided by the information patients tell us they want to find. In this report, we do not cover contractual or mandated requirements for GP websites, and our focus is to assess the quality and content of information that service users tell us they want, and expect, to find on GP websites.

# What did we find?

### How to join the practice

All but one website offers information about joining the practice. Most list documents as a requirement for registration, including photographic ID (driving licence or passport), and proof of address. Two websites don't clarify if any documents are needed to join the practice. A small minority make it clear that no documents are needed, but only for those who are homeless or without permanent residence.

**None of the websites offer the Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group and Healthwatch Greenwich patient registration leaflet** (see appendix 3). This leaflet was designed, in response to feedback from residents, to clarify and simplify patient registration requirements, so it's particularly disappointing this is not being used.

#### Easy to find?
Information on how to join a practice was generally easy to find, with most websites featuring it on their home page, using headings such as *"New patients"*, *"Patient registration"* and *"How to register with us"*.

### What medical help is available when the practice is closed (Out of Hours)
30 websites offer information about who to contact when the surgery is closed, service users are usually advised to contact NHS 111.

#### Easy to find?
Information about who to contact when the surgery is closed is generally easy to find, with several websites listing it within their opening times section on the home page or their '*When we are closed*' section.

## Greenwich Hubs

13 websites offer information on GP Access Hubs. In the best examples, this is provided in the 'out of hours' section.

Websites vary on the level of detail provided on GP Access Hubs. Some websites don't list all the sites GP Access Hubs are available or make it clear how to gain access to them. **Very few websites provide the Greenwich Health flyer on GP Access Hubs[7]** (see appendix 4) **or offer a link to it.**

## How to give feedback and comments, can patients leave online feedback that can be viewed publicly?

Ten GP practices offer patients the opportunity to leave feedback using their website, but it cannot be viewed publicly.

**One website gives patients the opportunity to leave online feedback on the surgery site, and a further website offers a link to Healthwatch Greenwich feedback centre, to leave comments online to be viewed by other service users[1].**

This is particularly disappointing. Healthwatch Greenwich has a statutory function to drive improvements in health and social care by gathering the views and experiences of patients and the public and making people's views known. All GP practices have access to our free Patient Feedback Widget which helps services collect and listen to the experience of their patients by placing the feedback tool directly on their website.

Two websites offer a link to Healthwatch England. None of the websites offer a link to other places to leave online feedback such as the NHS website[1] or Care Opinion[1], although two websites provide general information (but not links to) other ways service users can leave feedback.

22 websites suggest comments and feedback can be sent to the practice manager by calling the practice or by writing in using a template. One website does not offer a template form for feedback, despite stating there is one.

### Easy to find?

Information on how to give feedback is not always easy to find. Several websites give instructions at the bottom of the *"Contact us"* page, under *"Comments and suggestions"*. However, placing it at the bottom of the page made it easy to miss.

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[7] https://www.greenwich-health.com/gp-access-hubs

Other websites put it on a side panel on the homepage, under *"Further information"* or *"Patient information"*. One website put information on how to give feedback in the *"Services"* section (containing information on test results, non-NHS services, and travel vaccinations), which looked out of place and made it difficult to find.

## How to make a complaint

26 websites give information on how to make a complaint. Patients are offered multiple ways of doing this such as calling, emailing or writing to the Practice Manager.

Most websites offer an online form to be completed and sent electronically. Four websites make it particularly difficult by offering forms that can't be completed online and must be downloaded, printed in hard copy, and then sent in by post or by hand to the practice. Two websites make it harder still as they don't offer an online form despite suggesting they do.

Few websites offer alternatives for service users who don't want to complain directly to the practice.

### Easy to find?
Information on how to make a complaint is often difficult to find. Few websites have a 'complaints' tab on the home page menu and multiple 'clicks' or trawls of pages is needed to find relevant information.

Other websites include complaint information at the bottom of webpages, making it easy to miss.

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Quality of information provided on the process of making a complaint varied widely. Most websites simply ask service users to contact reception or the Practice Manager without explaining what to expect.

Few websites give clear and comprehensive information on their complaint procedure such as, who to send complaints to, response times, and what service users can do if they are not happy with the outcome of their complaint, such as signposting to NHS England, Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group, and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. **Very few websites tell service users where, or how, they can get advocacy support to make a complaint.**

## Information about Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) and how to join

28 websites mention their PPG, but few go beyond that. Most don't offer explanatory information on what a PPG is, or how to join it. **None provide future dates for their next PPG meeting and only nine give contact details.**

Several websites offer a historical report of their last PPG meeting, dating to 2015 – 2017, and two websites give the date of their next PPG meeting as more than a year in the past. **Website evidence suggests either PPGs at these practices don't exist in any meaningful fashion or that websites are rarely updated.**

PPGs are key to understanding patient views and helping to improve services. Despite the requirement for all practices to have a PPG, and to make this group representative of the practice population, we did not find evidence of widespread PPG activity.

### Easy to find?
PPG information (where it exists) is easy to find with most websites offering a link from the home page or one or two 'clicks' away.

We found one example of PPG information almost completely hidden, taking multiple page trawls and dedicated persistence to find it.

# Information about Healthwatch Greenwich and how to contact us



Four websites provide information about Healthwatch Greenwich. Three suggest Healthwatch Greenwich is a useful contact for feedback and complaints. One website provides a Healthwatch Greenwich Enter and View report.

**We know that people want to give feedback about their local GP surgeries to help make care better, but many simply don't know how.** A YouGov (national) poll carried out in 2017[8] found that 76% of adults surveyed said they would be interested in sharing their feedback to improve services, but only 23% had done so. The most common reason for this was that patients were unsure how to provide comments and raise concerns (37%).

### Easy to find?

On the few websites that offer it, Healthwatch information was generally easy to find. Two websites have this information in the side-panel on the homepage, one in the feedback section, and the other lists it at the bottom of the homepage.

## Website language translation facility

27 websites offer a translation facility, usually Google Translate, which instantly converts website pages into one of over 100 languages.



However, there are many difficulties using Google Translate for medical information. Members of our Nepalese community tell us Google Translate often produces confusing or inaccurate information in Nepali. Research carried out in 2014[9], published in the British Medical Journal, involved translating commonly used medical phrases from English into 26 languages using Google Translate. Only 57.7% were correctly translated and 42.3% showed errors, some very serious. Of the translations, Western European languages were most accurate and African languages contained the most errors.

**Only one website gave information on how to get an interpreter at appointments.**

Given the diversity of patients in Greenwich, we are surprised not to find information on interpreting services on all surgery websites.

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[8] https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2017-09-19/call-gps-make-sharing-feedback-easier-patients
[9] https://www.bmj.com/content/349/bmj.g7392

**Easy to find?**
Although the link for Google Translate is often at the top of the homepage, its small size makes it easy to miss.

## Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating and report

The Care Quality Commission monitors health and social care services to ensure they meet essential standards of quality and safety. They do this by inspecting services and publishing the findings of inspections, along with providing an overall rating of the service, and individual ratings for 5 aspects of care[10].

All service providers, by law, must display their CQC ratings where service users can see them. Additionally, if the service provider has a website, they must also display their ratings on there[11].

Of the 31 websites we audited, 24 provide a link to their latest CQC report and 23 display their CQC rating.

**Ratings help people to find out about the quality of health and care services. Not displaying CQC ratings on service provider websites is a breach of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: Regulation 20A.**

**Easy to find?**
CQC ratings and links to reports are usually found on the homepage, making it easy to find. Some websites put this at the bottom of the page, making it easy to miss.

## GP Patient Survey rating

The GP Patient Survey is an annual survey that provides service users with the opportunity to share their experience and views of their GP practice. Replies to the survey are analysed to provide a rating which can be compared to other GP practices and help GP practices understand where they can improve[12].

GP practices are expected to act on survey results and doing so reflects on CQC evaluation and quality assessments more generally. In addition, some practices have a contractual requirement to improve on results for specific survey questions.

Several practices display an out of date rating for the GP Patient Survey on their website. **Most websites don't include their most recent GP Patient Survey Rating, with only two providing this.**

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[10] https://www.cqc.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-do-our-job/five-key-questions-we-ask
[11] https://www.cqc.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-do-our-job/ratings
[12] https://gp-patient.co.uk/faq

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**Easy to find?**

For the two websites that provide it, the information is on the homepage – under "Survey results", or on the "Have your say" section.

## Mobile Friendly

Most websites are not mobile-friendly for form completion. Websites offering complaint/feedback forms require service users to download the form to complete it. Introducing a further stage creates a barrier, making it harder for service users to share feedback or complaints.

## Ease of Navigation

Ease of navigation varied widely. Not all websites offered a search bar, making it difficult to find information quickly – especially on websites with poor signposting.

## NHS Overviews

Three GP websites were not working at the time of the audit, and we looked at the information provided for each of these GPs on NHS Overview website instead. Below is a summary of key findings for each GP:

**GP overview 1**

- Provides no information about medical help available out of hours
- Provides link for Family doctor services registration form
- Displays reviews and allows service users to leave reviews
- Displays results from GP Patient Survey
- Information was last updated January 2019

**GP Overview 2**

- Provides out of hours information – NHS 111
- Provides link for Family doctor services registration form
- Displays results from GP Patient Survey
- No reviews are displayed but service users can leave a review
- Displays additional language spoken by GP
- Information was last updated February 2012

**GP Overview 3**

- Provides out of hours information – NHS 111
- Displays additional languages spoken by GPs
- Provides link for Family doctor services registration form
- Displays results from GP Patient Survey
- Information was last updated February 2016

N.B: NHS overviews offer a limited range of information.

# Conclusions

Providing information on GP websites can be a quick and easy alternative for service users to access the information they need, without having to contact their practice by phone, email or in person. As part of our work on the NHS Long Term Plan[13], residents told us they are often confused by health information on the internet and are unsure what sites or sources can be trusted. GP websites can be a useful source of reliable information for patients. They can help reassure patients and appropriately direct them to seek further help and support when needed.

Having assessed 31 GP websites, and 3 NHS overviews, we found that the breadth and depth of information offered, and how easy it is to find, varies widely.

The best websites not only provided detailed information but made it easy to find with information signposted in under logical/appropriate headings.

# Recommendations

1. **Websites should provide information on GP Access Hubs and how to access them.**
   Less than half of the websites we audited provide information about GP Access Hubs and how to access them. Increased use of GP Access Hubs will reduce waiting time for patients struggling to get same week appointments.

2. **Websites should display the Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group and Healthwatch Greenwich Registration Leaflet**
   This leaflet was designed, in response to feedback from residents, to clarify and simplify patient registration requirements, so it's particularly disappointing this is not being used.

3. **Websites should have a complaints, compliments and suggestions section.**
   It is important that service users can provide feedback on their experience – good and bad - and given an opportunity to make suggestions, as not all feedback will be in relation to a complaint. All websites should offer a link to the Healthwatch Greenwich feedback centre, where feedback is published online, so patients and practices can see what is being said about the service[14]. The link should be clearly displayed on the website, under a section for example, titled "Your feedback".

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[13] https://healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/NHS-Long-Term-Plan-Engagement-Report-South-East-London.pdf

[14] https://healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk/services/

Websites should include clear details of the complaint procedure, including, who will deal with the complaint, a timeframe for response, and escalation options in the event of an unresolved or unsatisfactory response from the practice.

4. **Websites should be mobile friendly, and provide mobile friendly forms**
Smartphones are responsible for a third of all internet access[15]. Forms that cannot be completed on mobile devices or require downloading, printing and then returning by post on in person is an effective barrier, making it difficult to make a complaint or provide feedback.

5. **GP Patient Surveys should be displayed on every practice website and updated each year**
Whilst several GPs displayed out of date GP Patient Survey ratings only a small number displayed the most recent GP Patient Survey results for their practice. Sharing this important information on patients' experience adds to overall transparency and allows service users greater access to information when making decisions about which surgery to register with.

6. **Websites should provide PPG information, including what it is, how to join, who to contact, and a summary of the last meeting.**
PPGs have an important role to play in helping to give patients a say in the way services are delivered to best meet their needs, and the needs of the local community. Our audit suggests a missed opportunity for many practices in not adequately publicising their PPG.

7. **All websites should display their CQC rating and link to the report.**
This is a legal requirement. To make it easier for service users to find, we suggest it is displayed near the top of the homepage, or in its own (clearly signposted) section.

8. *All websites should provide a search bar*
Websites that use a main centre panel and side-panel (see appendix for reference) are easiest to navigate to find information.  The best examples use a central panel for practical information - opening hours, and patient registration, and a side panel for everything else - PPG, comments and complaints, and useful contacts. However, most websites are not organised in this way and it can be difficult to find information. A search bar is essential to ensure service users can find what they are looking for in a timely manner.

9. **All websites should display information about accessing interpreting services**

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[15] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/media-releases/2015/cmr-uk-2015

To reduce barriers to access and to reflect the needs of the diverse population in Greenwich, GP's must ensure that they provide information regarding interpreting services. Additionally, GPs should review their use of Google Translation.

# Provider's comments

Commissioners, service providers and key stakeholder are given the opportunity to review our reports prior to publication, to check for factual accuracy and to provide a response if required.

**Comments received from Greenwich CCG:**

*This has created some discussion amongst the PCNs and ourselves. There is no doubt that practice websites are a valuable tool for both service users and practices. The CCG would like to share the following observations:*

1. *As you may know there are no mandatory requirements covering the content of GP Practice websites. As the requirements against which you have assessed the practices were chosen by Healthwatch and do not form part of an accepted list, in the interests of clarity we think that this should be stated on Page 4 where you have listed your assessment categories. You could also add the guidance or standards that you have relied upon.*
2. *The most accepted list of requirements is that suggested by the Care Quality Commission. This list forms part of the CQC Inspection process and this is the list that practices work to. Perhaps you could add in how practices faired against the CQC list.*
   *https://practiceindex.co.uk/gp/blog/preparing-your-website-for-a-cqc-inspection/*

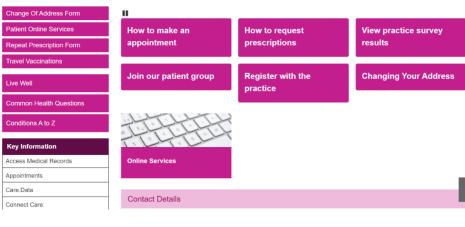**Comments received from Local Medical Council:**

*Our thoughts would very much echo the comments already made by the CCG: an assessment against the CQC requirement would seem a much fairer way of assessing Practices' websites. It is important to make clear in the report where Healthwatch is applying its own expectations/requirements.*

*Highlighting examples of good website design/functionality is helpful in encouraging other Practices to adopt a similar approach and shared learning, but again making it clear that these are not mandated requirements.*
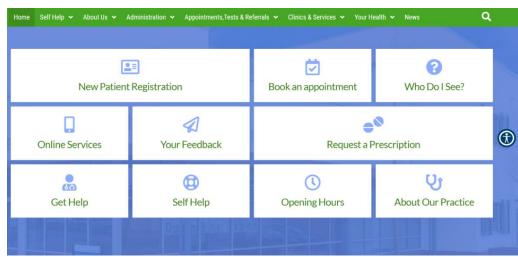
# Appendices

## Examples of user-friendly websites

## List of GP websites included in audit

Blackheath Standard PMS

Manor Brook PMS

Fairfield PMS

Vanbrugh Group Practice

Briset Corner Surgery

Coldharbour Hills PMS

Elmstead Medical Centre

Eltham Medical Practice

Eltham Palace Surgery

Eltham Park Surgery

New Eltham Medical Practice

Sherard Road Medical Centre

Westmount Road Surgery

Burney Street PMS

Greenwich Peninsula

Plumbridge Medical Centre

Primecare PMS (South Street)

Woodlands Surgery

Abbeywood Surgery

Bannockburn Surgery

Basildon Road Surgery

The Waverley Practice

Triveni PMS

All Saints Medical Centre

Clover Health Centre

Mostafa PMS

Glyndon PMS

Plumstead Health Centre

Conway Medical Centre

Valentine Health Partnership

Thamesmead Health Centre

Royal Arsenal Medical Centre

The Trinity Medical Centre

St Marks Medical Centre

# New patient registration

## Are you registering at a GP practice?

To help you we have produced a list of the information you will be asked to provide by the new GP practice.

You will usually be asked to complete a registration form called the family doctor services registration, which asks for this information:

- Name
- Address
- Date of birth
- NHS number, if you know it
- Name and address of your previous GP, if you had one
- Whether you wish to sign up for organ donation

## Why does your new GP need this information about you?

- Your GP needs to know where you live to make sure you are within their geographical area so that they can refer you to local hospital and community services, and if you need them – receive home visits.
- Your previous GP details will help your new GP to request your medical records, and match you correctly to the NHS central registry.
- Your new GP will also be able to provide up-to-date information about your health, which will help others to be able to look after you safely.

Some GP practices may also ask to see proof of identity and proof of address so the practice can contact you with important clinical information, send test results and any relevant information relating to appointments and referrals.

If you need more information about registering at a Greenwich GP practice or experience any difficulties while registering, contact:

Healthwatch Greenwich

020 8301 8340

info@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk

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# GH GREENWICH HEALTH

# DO YOU NEED TO SEE A DOCTOR IN THE EVENING OR THE WEEKEND?

## ASK YOUR PRACTICE ABOUT OUR EVENING AND WEEKEND GP ACCESS HUBS

If you are registered with a Greenwich practice, you can book a **GP or a Dressing Clinic** appointment by:

✓ Ask your GP Practice to book you an appointment directly into the hubs

CALL 111 Call NHS 111 if your Practice is closed to check if your concerns are suitable for the hubs

📌 Some restrictions apply and capacity is limited. Please see our website for more detail.

## 4 EASY TO ACCESS LOCATIONS

**Eltham Access Hub**
Eltham Community Hospital
30 Passey Place, London, SE9 5DQ

**Thamesmead Access Hub**
Thamesmead Health Centre
4-5 Thames Reach, London, SE28 0NY

**Greenwich Access Hub**
The Burney Street Practice
48 Burney Street, London SE10 8EX

**Charlton Access Hub**
Fairfield Health Centre
43 Fairfield Grove, London SE7 8TE

## Monday-Friday: 4pm to 8pm | Saturdays and Sundays: 8am to 8pm

GH GREENWICH HEALTH          www.greenwich-health.com          NHS Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group

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# Contact us

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# If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us at the address above.

We know that you want local services that work for you, your friends and family. That's why we want you to share your experiences of using health and care services with us – both good and bad. We use your voice to encourage those who run services to act on what matters to you.

We are uniquely placed as a national network, with a local Healthwatch in every local authority area in England.

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.