

Enter and View Report

The Lea Surgery

July 2022



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“The staff is very helpful and they answer all of my questions. Medications are explained very clearly. I book my appointments over the phone and they always answer the phone.”

Visit Details	
Service Visited	Lea Surgery Alfred Health Centre, 186 Homerton High St, E9 6AG
Manager	Mr Walter Nolan
Date & Time of Visits	06 th July 2022 09:30 - 12PM
Authorised Representatives	Kylie Simpson Sara Yacoub
Lead Representative	Catherine Perez Phillips

1. Visit Background

1.1 What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to undertake 'Enter and View' visits.

Mandated by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the visits enable trained Healthwatch staff and volunteers (Authorised Representatives) to visit health and care services - such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries and pharmacies.

Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service, but equally they can occur when services have a good reputation.

During the visits we observe service delivery and talk with service users, their families and carers. We also engage with management and staff. The aim is to get an impartial view of how the service is operated, and being experienced.

Following the visits, our official 'Enter and View Report', shared with the service provider, local commissioners and regulators outlines what has worked well, and gives recommendations on what could have worked better. All reports are available to view on our website.

1.1.1 Safeguarding

Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with safeguarding policies. If at any time an Authorised Representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they need to inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

1.2 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

1.3 Methodology

We notified the service five days prior to the visit, as well as sent them leaflets and posters to notify the patients about our arrival. The posters were available in the waiting area.

1.4 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Hackney would like to thank the Lea Surgery manager, staff and service users for their contribution and hospitality in enabling this Enter and View visit to take place. We would also like to thank our Authorised Representatives, who assisted us in conducting the visit and writing this report.

Two Enter and View Authorised Representatives and one staff member attended the visit. The Authorised Representatives spoke to residents, visitors and staff. Suggestions have been made on how to improve the service and good practice has been highlighted.

2. About the practice and purpose of the visit

CQC report and rating

The service was last inspected by the Care Quality Commission Group on 6 December 2016. A report was published on 12 April 2017 and a copy can be found here <https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-547645135?referrer=widget3>

The service was marked as GOOD for being Safe, Effective, Caring, Responsive and Well-led.

The CQC reviewed the information and data available to them about The Lea Surgery on 7 July 2022. They have not found evidence that a reassessment of the rating was needed.

Online Feedback

The surgery's [Google review page](#) contains mixed feedback mostly related to booking an appointment, administration and staff attitude. The average rating given is 2.9 out of 5.

It is worth noting that the Practice has responded to much of the patient feedback, offering an informal conversation with the practice manager.

Purpose of the Visit

Enter and View visits enable Healthwatch Hackney to form an impartial view of how services operate and how the service is experienced by service users and carers, and to produce a report.

Our decision to visit was influenced by the following factors:

- Routine comments and feedback from patients to Healthwatch Hackney
- Healthwatch Hackney's priority to review the service delivery and quality of care of all health and care services in the borough.

3. Summary of Findings

During the visit, we spoke with 10 service users and the Practice Manager, Walter Nolan

The Authorised Representatives made the following notes and observations:

- On arrival, Authorised Representatives were kindly welcomed by the reception team and were reminded that they should wear face covering at all times.
- All staff were polite and helpful throughout the visits.
- We were able to access all areas, and engage with residents, visitors and staff as appropriate.
- The Enter and View visit posters were clearly displayed.

The following observations were made during the visit:

Covid-19 and Visiting

Notes

- Recently the practice asked patients to wear masks but have been told that there is no requirement. There has been reasonable compliance with this, although some patients are exempt or claim exemptions.
- If patients present with COVID like symptoms such as a cough or runny nose they are asked to get a COVID test done at the pharmacy before attending the surgery. These tests are not free of charge.

General Environment and accessibility

Notes

- There is no automated door at the entrance. We witnessed and had to intervene to help a mother out with her child who was in a wheelchair.
- A bicycle was in the way of the main entrance which could be a potential obstacle for people with physical disabilities and parents/carers with prams.
- There is a ring bell that patients with physical disabilities can use to notify the reception team of their arrival and support needs.
- The waiting area had good lighting and was clean and tidy. Several patients fed back positively about the environment and the seating.
- The waiting area was small and space was an issue. However, we were told by the Practice Manager that there are plans to extend the space and to have an additional consultation room have started.

- There was induction/hearing loop available at the reception desk.
- The practice had a fire alarm and extinguishers which were located at all 4 exits of the building.
- There is an emergency trolley (first aid kit) located in room #1 and could not be seen from the waiting area. However, there was a sign down the hallway stating that there is a first aid kit in room #1.
- There is a defibrillator available on the emergency trolley. behind the front desk at the patient's request.
- The practice only has a high counter, which might be an issue for patients on a wheelchair or mobility scooters.
- As a result of the number of staff receiving abuse from patients, they introduced CCTV (last year a patient took the GPs car keys). The CCTV system acts as a deterrent, if a patient raises their voice, they are reminded that they are being recorded.
- There were notice boards which seemed overcrowded, and several leaflets were providing out of date information.
- There was an accessible toilet at the building, however, one of the bagels which was supposed to be touching the floor to aid the person easily pulling the alarm cord was tight high up.
- The alarm cord in the toilet had been tied up. It should reach the floor so that it is accessible to someone who has fallen.
- There was no cleaning schedule for the toilets, however, they appeared to be clean. The toilet lacked a toilet seat.
- There is a baby changing facility.

Access to services (booking appointments)

Notes

- All patients on the day reported booking their appointment over the phone.
- Most patients were able to book their appointment for the same day and some of them were seen in person. Reception staff demonstrated flexibility, for example fitting in a patient who had misunderstood that her appointment was in a week's time.
- Mixed feedback was shared about the timeliness of responding to calls.

Patient care, dignity and support

Notes

- We observed that the receptionists were warm and friendly towards all patients.
- Members of staff were engaging, friendly and approachable toward their colleagues and patients.

- There is Plexiglas separating the patients from the reception team, but some information can still be overheard.
- Most patients felt satisfied with the quality of the service received.
- Most patients felt listened to by the professionals and their concerns are taken into account.
- Some patients felt rushed during consultations
- Some patients complained about the lack of communication and follow up on medical condition.

Feedback and Complaints

Notes

- Information about how to make a complaint was posted on a notice board. The information, however, was very detailed and stretched over several A4 sheets of paper. It was as a result almost impossible to read. It might be better to have this detailed information in a folder together with a summary poster.
- No patients interviewed on the day had raised a complaint in the past or talked about the need to complain.

Signposting and information

Accessible Information

- No information about the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) was available. Staff had also difficulties in recognising the AIS as a document and procedure to comply with.
- Posters were displayed on the consultation room doors directing patients to the reception staff if they have interpreting, hearing, vision, learning, or other special needs.

Notes

- There were several options of reading materials for patients to read while waiting.
- The notice boards were messy and overcrowded, and several leaflets were out of date.

4. Discussion with the practice manager

About the service

- The practice has a patient list of approximately 12,000.
- Lea Surgery is open seven days with late surgery available to patients up to 7:30 PM.

Apart from providing general healthcare to patients, Lea Surgery offers the following additional services to its patients:

- Baby services:
 - Baby checks with the health visitor.
 - 8-week injections for baby with practice nurse (not offered on Wed or Sun).
 - Health and wellbeing coaching in person or via telephone appointments.
 - Social Prescribing.
 - Mental health services (psychologists; therapies- on a referral scheme).
 - Health wise referral schemes (ex: free gyms).
 - Pharmacy referrals for minor ailments, such as ringworm and the common cold.
 - Smear tests and blood tests are other services available at the practice, and are also available during the weekend opening hours.

The team

- There are eight (8) GP's working for the practice with on average 3 GP's on duty at any one time. The practice reported experiencing problems in recruiting more GPs or long-term locum doctors.
- There is in house pharmacist at the practice as well as a nurse practitioner.
- There are three to four admin staff at any one time: 3 accepting calls and 1 at the front desk.

Appointments and wait time

- Appointments can be booked either over the phone, online or by walking-in to the practice.
- Patients are given the choice between a face-to-face or telephone consultation.
- For call-in appointments, patients are taken through phone triage; if this is an urgent request, then the patient can be called in on the same day. Otherwise, appointments can be given within three days.

Will be changing to a new online consult system for one recommended by NEL.

- The Practice moved to a new telephone system in April 2022 which helped them better respond to patients' calls. According to the new system, the practice receives an average of 2,500 calls a week.
- GP appointments over the phone run for 5 minutes and face-to-face appointments for 10 minutes.

- Appointments with the nurse run from 15 min to 30 mins, depending on the service provided.
If an interpreter is used during a consultation, the appointment time can be longer.
- The practice guarantees that people will be seen on the day they call, even if they phone in the afternoon.
- Lea Surgery promotes the use of the Patient Access app and NHS app and have reported positive experiences from patients who used the apps for repeat prescriptions or accessing medical records.

Patient feedback and complaints handling

This is listed on a noticeboard in the waiting room and on the practice website.

The practice policy is to deal with any complaints informally (where possible). The practice manager reported that most patients' concerns have been dealt with successfully this way, although *"There is often a misunderstanding or an expectation gap in relation to what patients can expect"*.

However, some of the complaints received at the practice outside of the control of the practice. An example given, related to patients complaining about not receiving test results from tests done by the hospital.

Patient support and confidentiality

- Interpreting services are offered.
The practice uses the Language Line for telephone interpreting. This generally works well.. However, bi-lingual staff members and family members are also used to support patients with interpreting needs. The practice uses a flagging system to report on patients' interpreting needs.
- The practice has experienced difficulties arranging face-to-face interpreters due to the limited number. The manager also reported that there are issues of interpreters being late for appointments or canceling visits at the last minute.
- Space within the practice is an issue. Following a lengthy process to access funding from the CCG they have finally reached an agreement to rent of space on the 1st floor. This will give more space for the admin team and also allow for an additional consultation room

Safeguarding

- There are regular multi-disciplinary meetings and yearly training for staff.
- If an issue arises, this is passed to patients' named GP and the safeguarding lead who discuss and agree on an action plan together.

Conversation with a GP

A GP reported facing some administrative challenges which can be time-consuming. An example was given with a patient whose surgery was canceled by

the hospital due to staff shortages. Instead, the GP was told by the hospital to contact the department requesting speeding up the process. The GP felt this was an unnecessary administrative burden.

GP also faces pressure as a result of ambulances not being available. An example was given with a 93-year-old patient who fell and no ambulance was available to attend so the GP had to make an unexpected home visit. There was also no emergency district nurse available to dress the patient's wounds.

5. Selected patient feedback

General environment and physical accessibility

- *"I think that the building is signposted well and easy to find for those are coming for the first time."*
- *Bigger doors for wheelchairs would be helpful as well.*

Access to services (booking appointments)

- *"It is usually not a problem to book a face-to-face appointment." The patient reported that it takes a long time to get a response to the phone call and that today she had to wait 30 minutes.*
- *The patient called in that day and got a same-day appointment for a GP check-up and a baby check-in. She says the service is "fine," and that the at booking is smooth.*
- *"I usually call and the longest I ever waited in the queue is 10 min."*
- *"I am able to book appointments in person or over the phone. The calls get answered quickly."*
- *"I don't mind telephone appointments if it is for symptoms that do not need to be seen by a doctor."*
- *"I wish that there are more face-to-face consultations offered as I feel they are more beneficial than over-the-phone consultations."*
- *"I had an emergency and was able to get in that day, otherwise it takes a while to get an appointment too."*

- *“Booking appointment is smooth, I called this morning and got in.”*
- *“I call over the phone to book appointments and I am always on hold for a very long time. Sometimes I end up hanging up because it is taking so long.”*

Patient care, dignity and support

- *“The service is good, however the practice should ensure better interpreting service for people that do not speak English as their first language.”* The patient is a native Turkish speaker and uses her children and the nurse as interpreters.
- *“GP is really good- prompt, take everything seriously. The receptionist and doctors are very kind. I’ve been here for 4 years and never had a problem.”*
- *“I have had a more positive experience here than other places. I have enough time and feel respected. Reception team is kind and helpful in person and on phone.”*
- The patient finds the reception team very helpful and feels that the diagnoses, treatments and medications are explained clearly by the medical professionals. The patient feels very listened to and supported by her GP. Registered for 23 years with the practice.
- The patient does not feel supported by her GP and does not feel listened to. *“I feel like the doctors are just there to be there and not there to be helpful for their patients. Booking appointments is very difficult as you are placed on hold for several hours and the waiting time itself inside the clinic is very long.”*
- *“Doctors get mad sometimes if you ask them to repeat something.”* The patient has English as a second language.
- This patient has been involved with this service for 3 years now and is very satisfied with the quality services that has been provided. *The reception team is wonderful, helpful and keeps information confidential. They kindly ask other people waiting to be serviced to wait a couple feet back for my privacy and I really appreciate this.”*
- *“The waiting time to be seen can be up to 30 minutes which I don’t mind. I know the waiting time can be long sometimes, but the doctors are doing everything that they can and I appreciate them taking time for others as I want to be treated carefully and thoroughly as well. Therefore, I do not mind waiting a little bit longer.”*

- *“I do not trust the doctors as they never go the extra step to make sure that patients feel satisfied. They are not helpful and are always rushing patients out of the door.”*
- This patient is somewhat dissatisfied with the quality of post-labour care she received. She came for a 6 week check for her baby, and while it wasn't dreadful, she felt dismissed, rushed, and her questions weren't getting addressed. For example, the doctor asked if she had a vaginal or caesarean birth, and when she said vaginal, there were no further questions, such as were there any rips or tears or how it went.
- *“The staff is responsive and professional. The medical staff are explicit in their explanations; straight to the point; very professional.”*
The only improvement suggested was enhancing privacy policies and going more digital for check-in to help with this.
- *“The reception team is very helpful and the privacy is great at the reception desk. All of my treatments and diagnoses are explained very well and I always understand them clearly. I trust the doctor with anything and everything and always feel validated and listened to.”*
- The patient was at the practice thinking that their appointment was for the day. but after checking in, it was discovered that they supposed to be seen next week. However, the patient was offered a consultation after a short wait.
- *“I feel listened to by the professionals.”*
- *“Everything has been fine.”* The patient has had good interactions with the staff and feel that the doctor listens to them.
- *“GP is really good- prompt and take everything seriously. Really appreciates that the GP is open Saturday and Sunday because of work. Reception and doctors are very kind.”*
- *“The staff is very helpful and they answer all of my questions. Medications are explained very clearly. I book my appointments over the phone and they always answer the phone. I trust the doctors and feel supported. I feel listened to by the doctors as well. I feel comfortable in the consultation room.”*
- The patient was using the services for 2 years and was suddenly discharged, unannounced when he moved. *“I tried calling regarding the appointment that I already had scheduled and they told me that they cancelled my appointment and discharged me from the clinic.”* He said he was confused and the reception team did not give him an explanation.

- *“The receptionists are not very helpful and they take forever to help the patients. They would rather talk to each other than help the long line in front of them.”*
- *“I do not always trust the doctor because they do not seem to care very much. They do not go the extra step to help patients. I do not feel listened to by the doctor and I feel rushed when they need to explain the medication that I need.”*

Feedback and Complaints

No feedback was shared about feedback and complaints.

What works well about the service?

- *“I really appreciate that the GP is open Sat and Sun because of work. It is easy to book an appointment.”*
- *“Have been here for 4 years and never had a problem.”*
- *“Everything has been fine.”* The patient is able to book in person and the phone gets answered quickly for them. They have had good interactions with the staff and feels that the doctor listens to them.
- *“I have been coming here for 22 years and I am happy with the service. I book my appointments in person and the wait time on the phone is very quick. I trust the doctor with anything and everything and always feel validated and listened to.”*

What does not work well about the service?

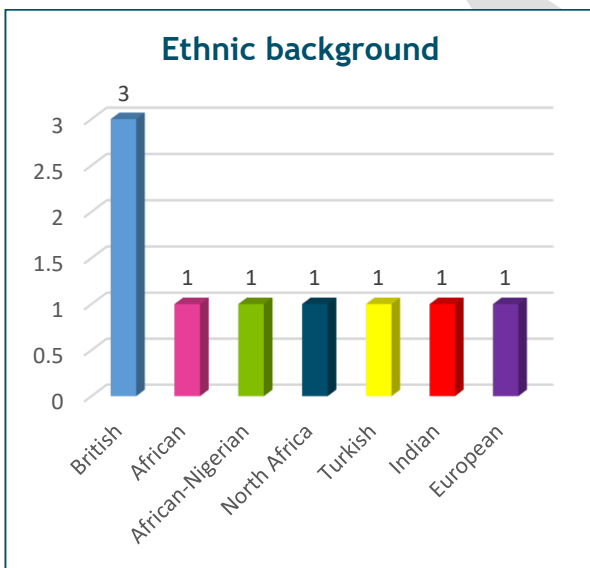
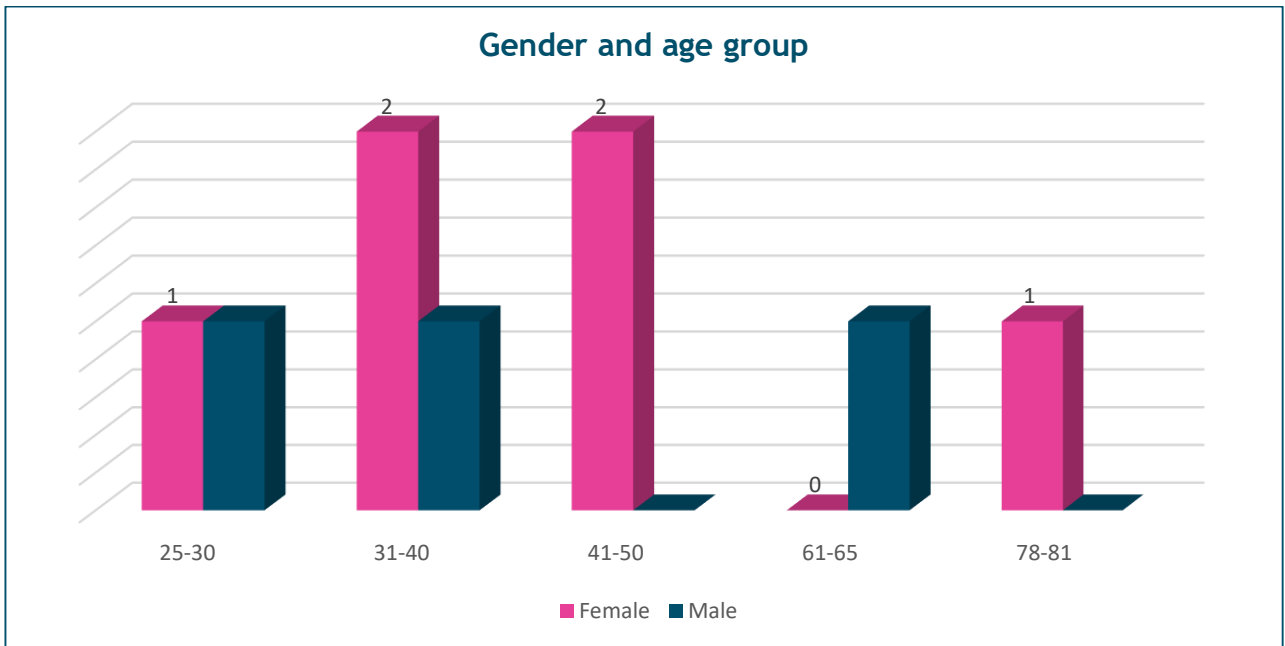
- *“I am not sure that I trust the doctor as sometimes she is rushing me out of the door and not making my concerns important. She tells me that I am fine and not to worry about it.”*
- *“The waiting time can be very long sometimes and feels as if maybe the practice is accepting too many patients. I don’t think there is enough time in the consultation room as I often feel rushed out of the door.”*
- *“I felt dismissed, rushed, and my questions were not getting addressed.”*
- *“The wait time is a bit long as it was over an hour. I feel a little bit rushed in the consultation room because I feel like the doctor thinks she / he doesn't have time for me.”*

- *“I was discharged because I moved and did not get notified about this. I showed up to my appointment and they told me that they cancelled it. I recently called 3 times per day for 3 days in a row and still could not get a hold of the receptionist to make an appointment. It is hard to make appointments.”*
- *“I think that there could be more privacy at check-in because there is nothing that separates the two people at the desk. Waiting time is a bit long as it can sometimes be an hour long. I feel rushed in the consultation room.”*

What could improve?

- *“Better interpreting service for people who are not English speaking and it is not their first language. Doctors get mad sometimes if you ask them to repeat it.”*
- *“Improving privacy and going digital.”*
- *I think that there could be better privacy at the check in reception desk. Everyone can hear your privacy. It would be nice if they can add more face to face consultations.*
- *It feels that the doctor is not there to do her job. I think they should have more appointments available and better GP's who want to be there.*

6. Demographics



English is not the first language for three of the patients interviewed on the day and they stated that this was a barrier for accessing health and care services.

Two patients had caring responsibilities and one patient stated they had a disability.

7. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of all feedback obtained, as well as on the Authorised Representatives observations and the website review, Healthwatch Hackney would like to make the following recommendations.

General environment and Accessibility

The service should make sure that the building and facilities are always fully accessible while in operation by ensuring:

- ***All doors have automatic opening mechanism and that can open to their full extend***

Lea Surgery's response:

To be discussed and reviewed with the Landlord.

We would expect to see accessible toilets are fully fitted with a means of raising the alarm to call for help when a disabled person requires assistance.

- ***Ensure the red cord is reachable from the floor and close to the WC***

Lea Surgery's response:

Actioned.

- ***Replace the missing toilet seat***

Lea Surgery's response:

In progress.

Access to services (booking an appointment)

Although many patients were able to book their appointments on time, there were comments about the long waiting on the phone to speak with the reception team.

We recommend that extra attention is given to the timeliness of responding to patients' calls to ensure quicker access to services.

Lea Surgery's response:

We are working with the provider on this matter.

The Practice moved to a new telephone system in April 2022 which helped them better respond to patients' calls.

Patient care, dignity and support

- ***Ensure training practice staff on the Accessible Information Standard for a quicker reaction when an inquiry comes in.***

Lea Surgery's response:

We will review and action.

- *Consider lengthening consultation times for patients that require more care, and emphasise empathy when dealing directly with patients.*

Lea Surgery's response:

We will review and action.

- *Better process for following up on patient medical conditions and tests undertaken.*

Lea Surgery's response:

We will review and action.

- *Ensure patients who have English as their second language are offered professional interpreting support. This will avoid the inappropriate use of children or other family members as interpreters and will ensure confidentiality.*

Lea Surgery's response:

Taken on board.

Feedback and Complaints

- There was some information about Complaint handling. *However, we suggest that Hackney's Health and Social Care Complaints Charter is also made available at the waiting area.*

Lea Surgery's response:

We will review and action.

- *Complaint policy should provide information about [NHS England](#), [Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#), [The Advocacy Project](#) - the Independent Health and Care Advocacy Services for Hackney and [Healthwatch Hackney](#) - Hackney's health and care watchdog.*

Lea Surgery's response:

We will review and action.

- *The Complaints Policy should also provide information about Hackney's [Health and Social Care Complaints Charter](#).*

Lea Surgery's response:

We will review and action.

- *Rather than being on a notice board, printed copies of the complaints charter should be available for people to pick up. There should be a poster giving essential details of the policy. General feedback form to be*

made available at the waiting area to allow service users to feedback on services at their convenience.

Lea Surgery's response:
We will review and action.

Signposting and information

The waiting area had notice boards with different leaflets on display. However, many of those provided out of date information and made the boards look overcrowded.

We recommend that the notice boards are better organised and provide up to date health and care information such as Carers' support, Mental Health support groups, Healthwatch Hackney, Hackney's Complaints Charter, Accessible Information Standard, Dementia, Special Educational needs, and other relevant information that patients and carers may benefit from.




Lea Surgery's response:
We will review and action.

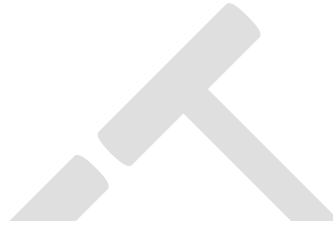
8. Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the general public and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

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