

August 2022 Monthly Feedback report



We heard from service users in Eltham at the Carers Social Group

The feedback presented in this report represents 373 responses from the following:

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

GP Services

Getting an appointment

Service users can get telephone consultations quickly and easily:

“Telephoned for a doctors appointment at 3.30 and was advised doctor would call at 3.40. At 3.37 the doctor called!!!! How’s that for splendid service”

“Great doctors and medical team. I can always get an appointment or call back when needed”

“Over the last two months we've had regular 'check-in' telephone consultations and a couple of face to face meeting with doctors and their supportive team. The practice has been undeniable brilliant, absolutely super”

Not all find it easy to access the services they need. Service users say it's hard to get through to reception or get an appointment at some GP practices. They turn to A&E instead: ***“I had surgery 4 weeks ago and have still not been able to see a GP! I ended being taken to hospital by ambulance. Called GP for a follow up, no appointments!”***

“Ended up calling 111, who have logged a complaint (“concern”) about the GP as they couldn't get through to them, and then directed me to go to A&E instead because they couldn't get any progress with the GP either”

“I had an issue booking a GP appointment. As a young mum, I had no other option but to go to A&E”

Digital Access

Accessing GP services online can be difficult. ***“I was told to try Econsult but that’s only open between 8am and 12pm”***

“Very disappointed trying to register with them more than 3 times online because I just moved to this area. They keep telling me that you are not registered with us - do it again, even if I have the 3 reference numbers”

GP receptionists

We heard some great feedback about the help and support offered by front desk staff. ***“Changed to this practice and no regrets. Reception to GPs, everyone is super friendly and helpful”***

“Been coming here for a few months and the staff at reception are always lovely and helpful with everything you request”

Not all have a positive experience: ***“Extremely rude reception. As a GP surgery worker myself, their attitude is just appalling, I have never seen anything like that”***

“Rude reception staff that demand that I wear a mask or miss my appointment but yet they have theirs hanging off of their chin!”

“Truly disappointing and have finally decided to leave this practice as it's significantly impacting my mental health. The receptionist appear to be clueless, no one ever seems to know what they are actually doing and they all contradict each other”

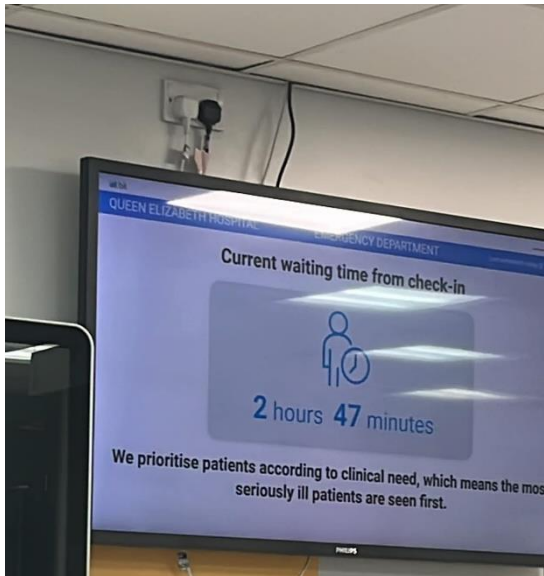
Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Foundation Trust

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

A&E

Many experience long waiting times and comment on how busy A&E is: ***“My sister-in-law was left for over 24 hours [in A&E] ...”*** and ***“A&E was noticeably overcrowded”***

Others say they had a short wait, recorded with a picture of the two hours and forty seven minute waiting time on August 23rd:



Blood tests

Service users continue to find it difficult to get timely blood tests at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, even using the digital booking system, Swiftqueue¹:

“Swiftqueue was far from swift. 2/3 weeks to get bloods done”

“In QEH when I was there on 4th August, 8am – there was one blood test lab technician out of the usual 5–6”

“Was being screened for cancer and blood test was urgent. My GP told me that I could walk in...They refused me as walk in and tests booked online were weeks away. I went back made a scene and speech about “if this was your mother how would you feel and you are sending me away knowing this test is an important one for cancer” I was quickly ushered in a room [and my] blood [was] taken”

Not all have long waits: ***“My dad rang up for a test appointment at QE yesterday for my mum. Was 7th in queue, less than 5 mins later got an appointment in a few days' time”***

Hospital discharge: Aftercare

Service users tell us staff don't always fully discuss care plans prior to discharge or provide clear information about aftercare. Relatives tell us they've had to pick up unexpected care bills as a result of poor

¹ <https://www.swiftqueue.co.uk/lewisham.php>

communication: ***“They [Queen Elizabeth] don't bother telling you [when the free 6 weeks of care ends] and I ended up with a bill for several hundred pounds for a care company who were utter rubbish and I was too stressed at the time to realise the free care had ended....mum's carers used buses and were always hours late or didn't arrive at all. I ended up doing everything myself most of the time”***

“The carers they [QE] want him to have are going to cost so much a day... it's ridiculous”

Those turning to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)² for help report a positive outcome. ***“The staff at the hospital were too busy to make/ discuss care plans but each time I contacted PALS they were brilliant at getting things moving. It shouldn't have to be that way, but it works”***

² <https://www.lewishamandgreenwich.nhs.uk/pals>

Ellie's experience

Ellie, a black 23-year-old woman lives in temporary accommodation. Following treatment at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, she has numbness in one side of her face, affecting her confidence and mental health: ***"This has had a huge impact on my life – I feel like I can't go out because I've lost my confidence"***

Ellie wants to complain about her treatment at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. She wasn't sure about the complaints process or who to ask, so she contacted 111. 111 gave her a Greenwich GP's telephone number: ***"I was so confused. The GP was also confused. We were sitting there on the phone wondering how this could happen"*** After speaking to her own GP, Ellie went online to find the information she needed.

Ellie's mental health is deteriorating – to the point where she wants to be in bed all day. Despite this, her support worker's notes state that 'she is fine and well'. ***"I feel like no one cares. My [Royal Borough of Greenwich] support worker keeps changing so I can't build up trust with any of them"***

Ellie says there are mice in the building and that the hot water cuts out – meaning she has cold showers and a flood in the bathroom put it out of action for a week. ***"My living situation is making me depressed and angry... How am I supposed to feel better when I have to live like this"***

Children's services: Community visiting team

We spoke to parents about their experience of support and care offered by Health Visitors: ***"They don't keep in touch. They didn't contact me to cancel an appointment... there is a huge communication gap"***

"... the Health Visitor wasn't good, she didn't notice my 2 year old's eye problem"

Parents tell us about long waiting times for referrals: ***"My two-year-old has developmental delay. We have been waiting for speech, and"***

language therapy since January. I called them many times, but they say they are short of staff, so we just have to wait”

Sexual Health: Market Street Health Centre

Service users praise the staff and quality of care when getting smear tests done: *“Amazing doctors, amazing nurses. Very attentive, very careful and patient. They explained everything and were so nice. The best!”*

“They are so much more experienced and expert than nurses at my GP and make it much less painful and awkward!”

Mental health services

Service users say they’d like to see more community support: *“It would be good to have more mental health care services... I’d like to see more support groups and community centre activities. They should be advertised more too”*

“I would like to see more youth clubs to improve the health and wellbeing of young people”

Access to interpreting services

Maxim can’t speak English. He contacted us in crisis, looking for mental health support. We got in touch with the Community Mental Health Team (Oxleas) who told us they couldn’t help Maxim because he’d not been referred by his GP and to contact the Mental Health Crisis line (Oxleas) who could offer a call back to Maxim.

The Crisis Line said they couldn’t help Maxim because he needed an interpreter. They told us non-English speakers have to contact 111 to get access to an interpreter.

We looked at Oxleas website ‘how to get help in a crisis’. No information is provided on how to access an interpreter for those in mental health crisis.

Eltham Community Hospital

The proposal for change offers an extensive new Community Diagnostic Centre at Eltham Community Hospital with intermediate care beds transferred to Meadow View ward, Queen Mary's Hospital³.

We found a range of inaccurate messaging circulating within the community, creating confusion. Some messaging incorrectly suggests the proposal or decision has already been made, including 'Eltham Community Hospital is closing' to 'a new diagnostic centre is opening in Eltham'.

Despite the mixed messaging, many service users are broadly supportive about the proposal: **"... it will be providing thousands of extra test facilities becoming proactive rather than reactive in assessing peoples' health and taking pressure off Greenwich and Lewisham Trust"**

"... it's not closing, its proposal is to convert the wards to a diagnostic centre. Converting would be a more accurate description ..."

"We are getting a new community hospital built ... I won't complain"

"Eltham hospital is an asset for Eltham - if they can use it and avoid being sent to London and Lewisham Hospitals for specialised tests... I am all for it to be used as a Diagnostic Centre and help the locals to get sooner seen and avoid commuting to London or Lewisham"

Some are concerned that the proposal does not offer good value for money or that services will be lost: **"All this money building it and opening it and now they want to close it"**

"50 beds are being reduced to 36 in total"

"The fact is that if you go to Eltham community hospital after this has gone through and look for the beds, they won't be there because it will have closed"

³ [Proposals for changes to services at Eltham Community Hospital | Let's Talk Health and Care South East London \(letstalkhealthandcareselondon.org\)](https://letstalkhealthandcareselondon.org)

While supportive of the proposal overall, some feel confused that beds at Eltham Community Hospital have been consistently under-used during a time of significant need: ***"If the wards are unused that's criminal"***

"It's a disgrace that a ward was totally unused ... badly planned. I must admit a diagnostic centre is the way to go though, And rehabilitation physio care. Prevention is better than cure"

"I'm not being listened to": Ryan's experience

Ryan lives with a long-term condition and receives ongoing treatment from his GP and Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). ***"I'm controlling my condition in the best way I can. I've mentioned my symptoms a number of times to various GP's, and before each hospital test, and to the surgeon, but I've never felt they're really interested or want to have a wider discussion with me"***

After a referral, Ryan went for a test at QEH with follow-up appointments at Eltham Community Hospital: ***"The surgeon told me the test failed due to equipment failure and advised that based on other test results, it would not be worth repeating"***. Ryan says no one explained to him why he was asked to undergo a procedure that was unnecessary.

Weeks later, when feeling marginally better, Ryan got a follow-up call. Shortly after, the surgeon sent a letter to his GP: ***"The letter seemed to imply that I was miraculously cured, but also requested that I retake the failed test I was previously told was pointless"***

Confused that the letter did not match the conversation he had, and that he was being asked to retake a 'pointless' test, Ryan tried to contact the surgeon's secretary. After several attempts to get through on the number he was given – which was never answered, Ryan left multiple messages. He never received a response. As a result, Ryan decided to make a complaint: ***"I enquired about PALS' information at the Eltham Community Hospital GP reception. They denied all knowledge of PALS!"***

I then asked at the outpatient reception where a very nice member of staff was very helpful but explained there were different PALS contacts depending on who the complaint was about. It was confusing. In the end the contact numbers for PALS they gave me were wrong"

Feeling fed-up and defeated, Ryan has decided to cease treatment, not because he feels better, but because he does not feel listened to: ***"My current feeling towards my health care is I don't want any interaction with any doctors. They are obviously not reading my medical history, including recent test recommendations. They are not listening to me"***.

Next Steps

We follow up on all concerns or issues raised. We will work with commissioners, providers, and service users to understand where services are working well and where further development may be needed.

Contact Us

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