

## About us

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Royal Borough of Greenwich. We're here to make sure that those running services, put people at the heart of care.



Our engagement manager, Kiki, speaking with carers of children with SEND about their experiences of accessing health and social care services.

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## What did we hear in May?

We heard from 276 people<sup>1</sup> about their experience of health and care services in Greenwich.

“ **I was most impressed with the high standards of professionalism during my recent admission. The surgeon explained the procedure to me in detail and the anaesthetist was cheerful and friendly. My post-surgical care in Cedar Ward was first-rate, the staff were kind, helpful and sympathetic.**

Lewisham University Hospital

“ **Terrible experience for my pregnancy, as much as the midwives and obstetricians are good in the delivery suite, all post-partum care is a disaster**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

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<sup>1</sup> Feedback collected through calls and emails to us, meetings between us and local groups or advocates, outreach and engagement events, conversations on social media and online reviews.

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## Primary care

### GP services – Appointments

You told us that getting access to GP appointments is difficult, especially over the phone. Many of you have often found you can’t get through to your practise reception at all, even when you call at 8am.

#### **You can never get an appointment even when you call at 8am sharp.**

##### Ferryview Health Centre

When booking an appointment, you said that most admin staff were polite and efficient, but some could be rude and uncaring. Some of you struggled to access routine medication because of multiple administrative or communication errors between the practise and your pharmacy.

**“ There have been numerous mistakes made, which has left me chasing for online activations codes, prescriptions and made me go back and forth between hospitals/pharmacies but it has always come down to the GP practice that they have left something unnoticed.**

Greenwich Peninsular Practise

**“ I am on a repeat medication and I was going away and running low, so called the practice over a week before my holiday asking if I can just have an emergency supply till I get back to get a review booked in. Receptionist put in a request but I heard nothing back. I called again to be told I need a review. I explained I know this and had called the previous week and the request had been denied. I got another phone appointment only to find out it was with the pharmacist who had to get a request from the doctor. The request was denied again by the doctor who kept saying I needed a review and I ended up having to call 111. I've decided to move to another practise- I can't just stop my medication and I don't understand why they made getting an emergency prescription so difficult..**

Eltham Medical Practise

You told us that e-consult was difficult and confusing to navigate and that some practises only made it available at limited hours of the day.

**“ It has been very difficult to get any appointments and the e-consult from is confusing. It asks how long are you going to be ill? How on earth would I know that?**

Ferryview Health Centre

**“ E-consult is only available for literally an hour each day and there's a long wait times to hear anything back.**

Royal Arsenal Practise

## **Sarah's experience: "I feel like I'm hitting my head against a brick wall"**

Sarah is the 24hr carer for her disabled sister, a wheelchair user with cerebral palsy and learning disabilities, and mum to Jon. Jon has behavioural challenges and Sarah struggled to get him the support he needs. She felt ignored and frustrated, saying, *"I tried so hard to explain Jon's issues to the school, the doctor, and anyone who could help, but they ignored me. After asking again, again and again, they finally referred him for an assessment when he was in year 4. He was diagnosed with severe anxiety and ADHD and gets medication."*

Jon's at secondary school now<sup>2</sup>, his ADHD and anxiety make it hard for him to focus and fit in and schoolwork is a challenge. *"He struggles with numbers, and he struggles with understanding, and he struggles with reading. He gets really upset because he can't keep up, and it makes him angry. He doesn't even want to go to school anymore."*

Jon's really behind at school and Sarah thinks he has learning difficulties but can't know for sure unless he is tested. She asked for help from Highpoint House<sup>3</sup>, where Jon gets support for his ADHD. *"I'm still waiting. The doctor hasn't gotten back to me. I just want to know what to do next, who to talk to, and how to get Jon the help he needs. I keep asking for advice and guidance, but I don't even get a reply to my emails."*

Sarah went to her GP<sup>4</sup>. They said they couldn't help and told her to speak to the school. Sarah asked the school for help. For more than a year she spoke to teachers, SENCO staff, and attended parent/teacher forums, each time asking for help for Jon. Sarah was told that formal screening for dyslexia could only be carried out by an educational psychologist and should have happened when Jon was in primary school, and there was no budget at his secondary school to provide a formal assessment. *"I feel I'm hitting my head against a brick wall."*

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<sup>2</sup> Harris Academy

<sup>3</sup> <https://oxleas.nhs.uk/services/service/childrens-specialist-community-paediatric-service-greenwich-117/>

<sup>4</sup> Eltham Medical Practice

*Everywhere I turn, they say they can't help him, they tell me they have other priorities."*

Jon was given an unaccredited screening by a teacher, which yielded inconclusive results. They suggested private testing, which Sarah can't afford.

*"What are we supposed to do, that costs hundreds of pounds, we can't afford that, it feels like only those who have the money can get their children the help they need."*

## GP services- Clinical staff

You told us that clinical staff are patient and accommodating and make sure you understood everything about your treatment.

**“ My nurse was professional, helpful and welcoming. I felt that she really listened to my concerns. The receptionists were also very helpful. I left the appointment feeling confident and better able to deal with my situation.**

The Trinity Medical Centre

**“ The clinical team is fantastic, they listen to your concerns, are compassionate, very friendly and approachable giving great advice.**

Thamesmead Health Centre

You told us that some clinical staff are dismissive and don't listen to your concerns.

**“ My 7 year old nephew had been ill for 2 days and on third day woke up with severe earache. The GP was very uncaring and said it sounded like an infection but didn't want to write a prescription for him. 24 hours later he was in A&E. Triveni PMS**

You told us your practise didn't always keep your medical record up to date.

**“ The surgery don't accept medical records digitally so they made my previous GP post them and so they had to be typed up again but this wasn't done for 6 months because of staffing issues. My prescriptions weren't on file and it was an absolute pain to get anything, so much so I ended up calling 111**

Triveni PMS

## Pharmacies/ prescription services

You praised local pharmacies for their outstanding service.

**66 The owners & staff here brilliant here, they are part of the community and it shows. How they remember everyone's prescription is so good.** Cubitt town Pharmacy

**66 Excellent staff and good service**

Logans Pharmacy

## Tracey's experience: "My child needs help. He's not a bad child. He has a medical condition; We need support, but we've just been abandoned."

Elliot, a child who initially met his developmental milestones, experienced a significant behaviour change as a toddler. Seeking help, Tracey faced difficulties in getting the right support. She shared her frustrations, saying, *"He started kicking, wetting the bed, stuttering. We went to CAMHS, and they promised to test him for ADHD and autism. They did some tests but social services said the paperwork wasn't done correctly, so the tests didn't count."*

As Elliot grew older, his behaviour got worse, leading to hallucinations, loss of speech, self-harm, and extreme agitation. Social services and CAMHS provided some support, but communication with support workers was sporadic, and no one would visit their home because of Elliot's challenging behaviour. Tracey feels abandoned, saying, *"They ignore my pleas. They don't come to the house. I feel left to cope with all this alone."*

The situation became more complex when Elliot was placed under social services' care and sent to Scotland. Although the people there were caring, Tracey wanted him closer to home so she could see him regularly. Elliot was then moved to Margate. *"When he was in Scotland, he was happy. The people were amazing, but then they moved him to Margate it wasn't good. There were problems with another resident, Elliot was bullied and harassed"*.

Now in his early teens and living back at home with Tracy, Elliot doesn't go to school and receives ten hours of tutoring per week instead. Tracy doesn't believe Elliot will ever be able to adjust into a school environment and she's worried about the future. *"My child needs help. He's not a bad child. He has a medical condition; We need support, but we've just been abandoned."*

## Hospital care

### Emergency Department

You praised the care and professionalism of the urgent care staff

- “**Went to urgent care from a 111 referral yesterday. Was really impressed with all the staff members I saw , from reception, to doctors, to ultrasound and x ray staff. Everyone was so friendly and results were prompt and I really felt confident and looked after and would like to thank all staff for their hard work**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, A&E

However, you also told us the security staff were not always responsive to security risks in the waiting area.

- “**Was in A&E today with my 87 year old Mum from 1am - 8am and the entire time, there was an abusive mad person who was racially abusive to every Asian person & generally just abusive to everyone. He was constantly harassing myself and my Mum and threatening to cut us in half with an axe! So many of us complained to security but they basically did nothing and allowed everyone to suffer.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, A&E

### Outpatients

You told us that incorrect referrals have led to you being passed around multiple departments, resulting in long delays to your treatment and negative effects on your health.

**“ I did not get the referral the doctor made for me. Instead without any evaluation I was sent to see the wrong department. So after 6 months to a years wait I had to start again in another waiting list to see the correct people. Then I was told I needed something urgently which has now been years without getting the right treatment. In 10 years they have got and done so much wrong that I am now left in permanent pain with no help and no chance of fixing it.**

Lewisham University Hospital, Neurology

You told us some outpatient appointments can only be booked over the phone, and it can be difficult to get through.

**“ I have been given an appointment which I need to change and the line they ask you to call on is never answered or they answer and put the phone down again.**

Eltham Community Hospital

### Children's Wards

You praised the patient and caring attitudes of the staff looking after the children's wards

**“ We visited the children's ward many times due to my daughter's asthma. All the staff are absolutely amazing in dealing with children, attentive to both medical and emotional needs.**

QE Hospital

## Angela's experience: "I dread our visits to ENT"

Angela is mum to George who has down syndrome. *"Because of his condition, George has multiple doctor appointments. We have to visit the ENT at Queen Elizabeth on a regular basis. That area is always busy. I've explained that George is nonverbal and autistic. Routine is really important for him. If they know they [the clinic] are going to be delayed we would like to know about it. It might not make a difference to them but even half an hour delay makes a massive difference for our family. We have to pull George off school, everything has to be changed for that day - we have to change his whole routine. George can't cope with change, it upsets him, he gets agitated."*



Angela says the ENT waiting area is not child-friendly and it's even worse for children with special needs. Angela's not been offered any ways to make the situation easier for George, even after asking for it. When booking his appointments, she explained George's needs and asked if he can wait or be seen in a quieter, calmer, more child-friendly environment – like the Dolphin Unit, but she's been told it's not possible. *It's very difficult for him to be in a noisy, strange environment, he gets anxious and upset. Whenever we have to stay there for long we end up with him crying. Last time George was so frightened by all the noise, all the people and being in a strange place, he had to sit on my lap the whole time, and he is not a small child. I have to carry toys, books and an ipad, things to try and distract him and make him feel comfortable. And it is not only me, I see other parent with children doing the same. I dread our visits to ENT."*

## Next Steps

We follow up on all concerns or issues raised.

We work with commissioners, providers, regulators, and service users to understand where services are working well and where there needs to be further development.

## Contact Us

For more information on our feedback report, contact:

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