

What you told us

Lambeth residents' experiences of health and
care services

April to June 2026

About us

Healthwatch Lambeth is your local health and social care champion. If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. As an independent body, we work with NHS leaders and other decision makers to listen to local feedback, improve standards of care, and reduce inequalities. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

This report brings together all the feedback we heard from April to June 2026. Feedback was shared with us over the phone, by email, through our website, and at in-person outreach events. All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

The feedback received from patients and their carers is presented as shared, and some feedback may lack detailed information or context. Nonetheless, we highly value patients' and carers' time and effort in sharing their views and experiences with us.

How we use your feedback

We follow up on all concerns and issues raised.

We share all compliments, complaints and concerns with the relevant service providers and commissioners. We ask that service providers acknowledge the feedback and make note of any actions they can take to address it. Feedback is shared either anonymously or, with consent, with contact details, so that service providers can respond to service users' concerns directly.

We answer any queries by providing the requested information, or by signposting to any relevant organisations that may be able to help.



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Photo taken at Making Time for Black Mental Health’s 4th Anniversary Celebration. May 2026.

Who we heard from

We have gathered valuable insights from people across Lambeth about their experiences of using health and care services. By actively listening to the voices of the community, we have gained a better understanding of their perspectives and the challenges they encounter when accessing healthcare.

Listening to feedback from different segments of the community is a priority for Healthwatch Lambeth. This helps us see the full picture and provide valuable feedback to service providers, enabling improvements.

From April to June 2026, we spoke to 210 people about their experiences of health and care services in Lambeth. We spoke to people from diverse groups, including people with learning disabilities, unpaid carers, people living with dementia, Black communities, refugees and asylum seekers, voluntary and community groups, and people with experience of mental health challenges.

What Lambeth people are saying

Top issues

We heard the most about hospital and GP services. We also heard about mental health services, adult social care, NHS 111, dentistry, and public health.

The most common feedback concerned:



Booking GP appointments using online services



Caring, kindness, and being listened to by GP staff



Waiting for hospital care, both referrals and treatment



Compliments

People praised services for being easy to access, with good quality of care.

GP surgery

"My GP is great – I've got nothing to complain about."

GP surgery

"M

"I

agreed with my proposed diagnosis, and sent my prescription to the local

pharmacy. Collected my medicine at 5:00pm!

"N

same day I rang. Very good experience of care and easy to access."

GP surgery

"M / surgery is good every time – my husband and I are very happy with it. The app

Dr IQ is really practical; you write in your concern, and they call you back a few hours

later. It's fluid, efficient, and flexible. I used to be with another GP where this was not

the case. I do realise that I am free to go to appointments at the times they tell me

to, which not everyone can do. Overall, I'm really happy with their service."

"I am a carer. The Community Mental Health team has really made a difference for

GP surgery are coordinator offers very good support, with a common-sense

attitude to things like confidentiality."

"I have had a positive experience with occupational therapy. I started in 2023 with a

locum, and she was absolutely brilliant. I also had a needs assessment from Adult

Social Care and a wet room installed, which was also positive."

Mental health services

Occupational Therapy and Adult Social Care

Feedback



Booking appointments

Some people expressed frustration at booking GP appointments using online systems.

"You have to complete an online questionnaire before you get to speak to the GP, and that can take up to 3 days to happen."

GP surgery

Provider response:

"Thank you very much for your email regarding the patient feedback. We offer on-the-day telephone consultations for patients to speak to a GP and do not ask patients to complete an online questionnaire to make one of these appointments. If there are no appointments available when the patient telephones, our reception team will ask the patient if they can share what the problem is- to establish the urgency- and then the patient may be asked to complete an online Accurx form which is reviewed and actioned appropriately."

"You wait to call at 8:00 am hoping they will help you and give you an appointment or phone call, because you feel bad but you're trying not to fill the emergency room. It turns out the receptionist, with no empathy, tells you to fill out an online form that says it takes one to two days to get a response.

Last time, I used the online form to book an appointment. I was lucky, and they called me a few hours after."

GP surgery

"I've been trying to book a work mandated check-up at my GP. Usually, I'd go into an appointment, talk to my GP to figure out the accommodations I need, and have the form stamped. When I tried to book my appointment this year, they told me they couldn't do it. I tried to talk to the practice manager, but they sent me to an online complaints form. They also keep sending me messages on the App, but I don't understand them. I just want someone to talk to me – I need to sit down with someone and have them explain things to me."

GP surgery



Caring, kindness, and being listened to

People told us they sometimes felt dismissed or disbelieved by GP staff when trying to make an appointment or access follow-up treatment.

"Receptionists don't listen to you. If you call in to book an appointment, they question you and decide whether you should be seen or not. They undermine your concerns. I'll tell them what I am looking for help with, and suddenly there's no appointments anymore! It feels like they are diagnosing you before you even get to see a doctor. It shouldn't depend on them if you get an appointment. If you call in, you should be seen within a week."

GP surgery

"I went to the GP for a blood test. I had a follow-up hospital appointment, and they ordered some medication for me. When I went to collect my medication, GP staff told me they needed to contact the hospital again, even though my record said I needed the medication. I'm an unpaid carer – I don't have the time or the energy for this back and forth."

GP surgery

"When I arrived, I checked myself in. When passing by, the receptionists didn't even say hi. They were talking quite loud about a patient that seemed to annoy them, and there was no hello or goodbye at all. I don't think it's just me. I believe they treat everyone the same way when calling for appointments or for any help. They may be annoyed by it, but if I'm calling the GP, it's because I'm feeling unwell, not bored."

GP surgery

"My GP is good; they've improved receptionists' attitudes on the phone. I used to get easily frustrated because they would contradict me or not listen to my concerns. For example, I was referred to rheumatology, and they sent a letter back to my GP. The GP did not reply to it, and when I tried to follow up, the receptionists were contradicting me. However, this was resolved after the hospital wrote to the GP and they booked me in for a check-up."

One person told us their GP had improved, as receptionists felt more empathetic and listened to her concerns.

GP surgery

People also shared negative experiences where they perceived healthcare professionals as unhelpful and impolite.

“Nothing was good about the NHS 111 service. I was misinformed about my antibiotics, and the pharmacist was rude and didn’t help at all.”

NHS 111

“My overall experience at the GP has been good, but a recent appointment was a marked exception. The attitude of the nurse was borderline rude. Several entries on the record are incorrect because I was not asked properly (e.g. duration of regular exercise, height). I gave a blood sample – this was the most painful and uncomfortable and the longest I have ever had. I’ve had some test scores following the appointment and remain concerned that these are based on bad information.”

GP surgery



Referrals and waiting for treatment

People told us about long waits for hospital referrals, with little communication.

“I had a good experience of care and was diagnosed with Basal Cell Carcinoma. However, it’s been a year since it was diagnosed, and the operation has been postponed 4 times. Now, it isn’t scheduled until September.”

Hospital services – oncology

“My daughter is a brittle asthmatic and was referred to A&E due to a very high heartbeat by her GP. She was seen and told she would be seen ASAP by a Cardiologist. She is still waiting for an appointment over 6 months later. This is impacting on her health and everyday life enormously.”

Hospital services – cardiology

“I have been waiting for over a year for a myomectomy. This prolonged waiting time is causing me significant distress, particularly due to the potential impact it may have on my fertility and reproductive health. This situation is not only affecting my physical wellbeing but is also having emotional and psychological impact.”

Hospital services – gynaecology

"Despite an endometriosis diagnosis, I was not referred to specialist nurses or told my fertility required urgent attention. A clinician documented that I should be reviewed within 3 to 6 months; I was not seen for eighteen months. During that time, I became severely anaemic. My communications, and those from my GP and PALS, went unanswered. This year, an MRI confirmed significant disease progression. I now require complex surgery, which may have been avoided with earlier care."

Hospital services – gynaecology



Cancellation

We also heard from people that had referrals cancelled abruptly or without communication, for care homes and hospital services.

"We were informed that my mother had been accepted by a care home. We were advised that the only requirement was to undertake a viewing of the home prior to admission. My brother and I rearranged our commitments at very short notice, travelled to the home, and confirmed that we were happy to proceed with the placement. Less than 24 hours later, we were informed that the placement was no longer available due to a "lack of capacity". I find this completely unacceptable."

Care home

"I self-referred to a hospital maternity unit after seeing I was eligible for care online. I didn't hear anything for five weeks. When I called, I was told my referral had been declined as the catchment area had changed. I am deeply distressed that my referral refusal was in no way communicated to me. Had I known sooner, I would have looked to access care from an alternative hospital."

Hospital services – gynaecology

Provider response:

"Thank you for your email and raising this. I am sorry to hear how distressing this experience has been for her. The PALS Lead has escalated this to our Complaints Team so it can be investigated and a member of staff from maternity services is planning to call her today to discuss the issue of the rejected referral."



Medications, consent, and choice

People told us about wanting their choices to be respected regarding their mental health medication.

“As a long-term mental health service user, I am raising concerns about being prescribed and pressured to take psychiatric medications that have been tested on animals. As a committed vegan, this goes fundamentally against my deeply held ethical beliefs and values. Taking these medications has caused me significant emotional and psychological distress over many years. I have felt powerless, unheard, and conflicted between protecting my mental health and remaining true to my moral convictions.”

Mental health services

“The psychiatrist warned me I would have to get a strong dose of medication because they see me as a “risk”. However, all parts of me will be affected by this medication; I’m not willing to allow a chemist to inhibit every part of me just because of one part of me. They’re right to be cautious, but they’re misreading the person they’re treating – they just see me as a risk factor from 1 to 10.”

Mental health services



Accessibility

We heard feedback from people with mobility issues about mixed experiences of getting transport support and adaptations.

“My friend was scheduled for a follow-up appointment following an operation, so we booked patient transport. We told them she needed help on the stairs, as she lives on the 4th floor and there’s no lift. When the driver turned up, he didn’t want to help. I couldn’t do it myself, so the driver left and she was stuck with a tube in her body. We went to A&E the next day, and she had to wait for 12 hours without being seen. A few days later, we were finally able to get an appointment where everything went well, and they removed the tube.”

Patient transport

"I have issues with lumbar degeneration and knee pain, as well as cognitive issues. I have to drive an hour and a half to work each way, and this causes me severe pain. I'm really struggling; it's affecting the care I can give myself and my son. I tried to get a Blue Badge and formal recognition of my disability, but I was not eligible."

Adult Social Care

"My experience with adult social care has been good, but there's been delays in getting adaptations. My husband and I (both in our 80s) had a bathroom seat installed, and it took four attempts. They measured wrong, then they brought the wrong seat, then there was another error, until finally they brought the correct seat. It took my husband a long time to reach someone to let them know the chair had been installed incorrectly. There should be a person that answers the phone, not a machine. Especially for older people – it was so difficult for us, and I imagine there are other people our age that would really struggle. The service itself is good... you get there eventually."

Adult Social Care

Learning from the Lambeth Learning Disability Assembly (LLDA)

The experiences of GP and hospital care of people with learning disabilities

What you said:

We visited the [Lambeth Learning Disability Assembly \(LLDA\)](#) to hear from people with learning disabilities about their experiences of using health services.

GP care

Time was a major barrier to accessing care at the GP. Many felt that GP appointments and blood tests were rushed and not long enough. While everyone in the meeting knew they could request double appointments, people were concerned that other people with learning disabilities may not be aware of this.

People felt Annual Health Checks were not thorough, as they were not given enough time to explain their conditions and develop comprehensive Health Action Plans.

"GPs should show you that they care about you and look at all of your needs."

People told us they found it hard to build a relationship with their doctor because they rarely saw the same GP twice. This also meant they had to repeat their health needs at each appointment, which could be frustrating.

They also felt that not all GPs knew how to interact with them. Often, GPs would be aware that they had a learning disability but would not understand what that means in practice and how it affects their specific situation. They wished there was training where GPs could learn directly from people with learning disabilities.

Hospital care

People sometimes had to wait a long time for treatment and referrals, often with poor communication. Invitations to appointments sometimes arrived in the post with little notice. This put them at risk of missing their appointment, which would mean being marked as a Did Not Attend and having to rearrange.

Navigating the hospital could also be challenging. People sometimes got lost as they struggled to read maps or signage because of poor eyesight or literacy. Some suggestions that would help them navigate the hospital included an audio guide, a video with subtitles for those with hearing loss, and support from a chaperone.

What we did:

We shared their feedback and suggestions with commissioners and our local hospitals. We also answered some of their questions about health and care.

People wanted advice and support on other aspects of their health, like their diet and mental wellbeing. We explained what social prescribers do and how they can connect with local groups for support.

We also spoke about patient safety initiatives like Jess's Rule and Martha's Rule and about chaperones at appointments.

While people knew how to raise concerns about NHS care, some worried that complaining would affect their care. We reassured them that this should not happen and encouraged them to reach out to us if they felt this was happening.

After our visit, we received a thank you from those who took part:

really enjoyed our time with you!"



Photo taken at the LLDA Forum meeting. May 2026.

“Support should consider how you’re perceived.”

Experiences of Mental Health Care from people from Black communities

What you said:

We heard from people from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds about their experiences of using mental health services.

Alicia, a mixed-race woman, told us she felt that her experiences of care were affected by her ethnicity and mental health needs.

Because of her experiences, Alicia told us she now avoids using NHS services unless for

Patrice, a Black Caribbean woman, expressed how she felt that healthcare staff sometimes did not know how, or did not try, to communicate with Black patients.

“Sometimes, mental health care staff don’t know how to talk to people from Black communities. Or they believe they don’t know, so they don’t attempt to learn.”

Several people we spoke to stressed that mental health care should be trauma informed and culturally aware, taking into account a person’s ethnic background.

Marvin, a Black African man, contacted us on behalf of his son with mental illness, who was soon to be discharged following a long hospital stay. Marvin felt that culturally aware community support would be crucial to helping prevent a relapse.

What we did:

We shared feedback from Alicia, Patrice, and Marvin with Lambeth commissioners and service providers, including our local Mental Health Trust.

For Marvin’s request, we connected his son to Black Thrive Global and their CAPSA programme, which aims to improve the mental wellbeing and recovery journeys of people of African and/or Caribbean heritage in Lambeth.

How can I raise my concerns about health and care services?

If you are experiencing any issues, the first step is to raise your concerns with the service.

NHS services

- **For primary care** (GPs, dentists, pharmacies, optometrists), speak to the service's manager in person, by phone, or by email.
- **For hospital care**, contact the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). For our local hospitals, these are:

[King's College
Hospital PALS](#)

[Guy's and St
Thomas PALS](#)

[South London and
Maudsley PALS](#)

Social care services

- **For care services** (care homes, supported accommodation, care agencies), speak to the service manager. If the care was arranged by Adult Social Care, you can also reach out to the local authority.
- **For Lambeth Adult Social Care**, you can talk to a social worker or file an appeal.

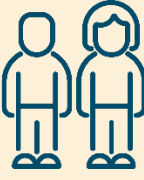
If your issue is not resolved, you may wish to file a formal complaint. You can find out more in the complaints guides on our website.

- [Raising a concern with an NHS service](#)
- [Raising a concern with a social care service](#)

Just Ask Us

If you're looking for information about health and social care services in Lambeth, we're here to help. We can also signpost you to organisations in the community that offer the support you need.

In April, May, and June, you asked us:

	Do medical students have to take part in my care?	You have the right to choose whether students can observe or help with your care. Your decision should not impact your treatment in any way. Find out more about NHS care and consent
	How can I raise concerns about a social worker?	Social Work England are the regulator for social workers in England. You can raise a concern on their website.
	How can I access mental health support for the first time?	Talk to your GP or contact the Lambeth Single Point of Access. They will refer you to the appropriate care.
	I have Motor Neurone Disease (MND). Where can I get support?	The MND Association and the Brain Charity offer practical support, peer groups, and advice.
	Am I eligible for help paying for care?	You can check if you're eligible for help to pay for NHS prescriptions, dental treatment, eye care, and more on the NHS Business Services Authority website. Click here to check your eligibility

Helping trans people find gender-affirming care

Accessing bridging prescriptions in Lambeth

What you said:

Orla works for an LGBTQ+ charity. They wanted to know if any GPs in Lambeth provided bridging prescriptions for trans people.

"Bridging prescriptions are a way for trans people to access HRT before they are seen by a Gender Identity Clinic (GIC). They are an essential aspect of healthcare for trans patients."

Orla was familiar with the Bridge Clinic, which provides this service in Lambeth. However, it has a ten-month waitlist.

"I wanted to know if any practices in the borough also provide this access as a mitigation strategy to these waiting times."

What we did:

We asked a Primary Care lead for more information. She told us the following:

"We have quite a few practices who have received the 'Pride in Practice' certification at different levels across Lambeth, and I'm aware gold standard means that they will follow shared care protocols for gender affirming care."

"Thank you for your consideration, it's really helpful!"

We shared this with Orla, who replied:

Contact us

You can tell us your experience or feedback by:

- **Online form:** www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/share-your-views
- **Email:** info@healthwatchlambeth.org.uk
- **Telephone:** 020 7274 8522

For more information on this report, or to request it in large print, contact info@healthwatchlambeth.org.uk.



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