

# Monthly Feedback Report

November

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## 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<sup>1</sup>.



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## What did we hear in November?

We heard from 204 people<sup>2</sup> about their experience of health and care services in Greenwich.

**“ They did well with addressing my enquiries and referring me if needed. What they could do differently is have a better booking system.**

GP Practice

**“ Midwives were amazing at Robert Owen.**

Bromley Healthcare

<sup>1</sup> Photo above taken from engagement with the Nepalese community in October 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Feedback collected through our monthly health and social care satisfaction surveys, meetings with local groups or advocates, outreach and engagement events, and research reports.

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## What Greenwich residents are saying...

### Accessibility of Services

**“Waiting times are the worst. I waited for three months to be seen at the hospital and the communication was bad – they sent me from department to department even when I had unanswered questions.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

**“I had to wait 17 hours to receive service. The waiting time should be improved. The doctors were fine but it's difficult to get there. They say that the severity of your situation gets you earlier treatment, but I do not believe that because I was feeling quite unwell.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

**“The hospital is very slow on appointments. I have two scheduled but one of these appointments will mark one year that I have waited.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

### Staff Communication and Support

**“I was at the fractures department in the hospital about 5 weeks ago. The x-ray procedure was well done; however, the consulting time with the doctor was too short. I wish there was more time for me to ask questions.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

**“I visited the hospital to receive injections on my back. The nurses and doctors provided me with good service. I wish they could send confirmation messages that would remind people of their appointment.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

**“ I visited the A&E department today and I wish there was better communication.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

**“ Everything was done well when I visited the hospital 2 months ago for a colonoscopy. I have no suggestions for them.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

### Maternity and Paediatric Care

**“ I used the hospital for my pregnancy, and I delivered there. I wasn't educated enough about delivering and I was a first-time mother. Secondly, the midwife on duty didn't behave professionally and hurt my feelings during my period of waiting for the inducing medication to work. She spoke down to me and that made me upset.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

**“ Pregnancy care was good but post-natal care needs improvements. The midwives were really helpful during pregnancy until birth. However, my postnatal experience wasn't good because of mixed advice from midwives.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

**“ I was there recently with my son, and we got an appointment quite quickly. The doctor did check him, but because my son had a problem with his adenoids, I wanted a referral for a specialist which was a problem. It's very difficult to be seen by a specialist, but the ladies at the reception were helpful.**

GP Practice

**“ I had an in-patient consultation a month ago and received a good consultation. The doctor listened carefully, giving my children and I the right treatment. Every time I call for an appointment for my children they book the appointment for the same day.**

GP Practice

## **Provider Response**

### **Response from Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust**

We are committed to improving our patient experience at LGT, so we welcome all feedback on our services. We do understand the frustration around A&E wait times. Our A&Es are extremely busy and we do our best to manage how long our patients have to wait for treatment. We are working hard to drive improvements in waiting time and have introduced some new measures this month, which we hope will start to make a difference. We are grateful for the feedback on our other services, and we encourage all patients to come to us directly so that we can listen, learn, and improve. Greenwich patients can reach us on 020 8836 4592 or [pals.geht@nhs.net](mailto:pals.geht@nhs.net).

## Amina's Story: "I was told to 'grow up' and 'stop behaving like a child'"

Amina, already anxious about her supply of prescription medication running out ahead of a bank holiday weekend, called her GP practice to request an emergency prescription. Amina depends on her medication to manage her mental health condition. However, what should have been a straightforward interaction quickly turned into an ordeal.

During her phone call, after waiting for an extended period, Amina was abruptly hung up on. "It really affected me," she recalls. "I was so upset that they'd just cut me off." This call added to her growing anxiety about her medication supply. Seeking a prescription, Amina and her husband decided to visit her GP practice in person.

Upon arrival, Amina tried to escalate her concerns by asking to speak with the reception manager. She was told they were unavailable. She then asked for the practice manager, only to receive the same response. She finally asked to speak to the most senior staff member present. After waiting, someone came to speak with her. This staff member did not introduce themselves, give their name, or explain what their role was in the practice. When Amina spoke of her earlier call with the practice, the staff member appeared disinterested, "I asked her to listen back to the phone call that had upset me, but she refused," Amina explained. When she raised concerns about running out of her medication, the staff member told her there was nothing they could do to help. Amina was stunned. "We couldn't believe it. My husband then asked to make an appointment with the practice manager, but we were told the practice manager doesn't speak to patients!"

For Amina, the stress and frustration triggered the onset of a panic attack. "I had shortness of breath, heart palpitations, difficulty speaking, and was very tearful," she recalls. Rather than being met with empathy and help, the staff member chastised Amina, telling her to "'grow up' and 'stop behaving like a child.'" The dismissive remarks made her feel worse, resulting in what she describes as the worst PTSD and panic attack she had ever experienced.

While Amina's GP provided empathy and medical support, no one wanted to take accountability. "When my husband told them what had happened and how I'd been treated, they did nothing—there was no follow-up on how I'd been spoken to and treated," Amina says, reflecting on the lack of response from the practice.

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## Provider Response

### Response from GP Practice

We would like to express our gratitude to the patient for taking the time to share their experience at our GP practice. We sincerely regret the distress and frustration this situation has caused, particularly the difficulties encountered while attempting to obtain an urgent prescription before the bank holiday. The patient mentioned that the call was unexpectedly disconnected. While we cannot determine the cause of the disconnection at this time, we would like to assure you that our digital telephony system offers patients the option to secure their place in the queue and request a callback, which aims to reduce wait times and provide continuous support.

Amina's subsequent visit to the practice raised further concerns regarding the responsiveness and empathy shown by staff members. Our commitment is to provide compassionate and respectful care. In response, we are enhancing staff training focused on patient-centred communication, particularly in managing sensitive situations.

Additionally, we are reinforcing the role of social prescribers, who are available to support patients facing complex needs by offering guidance, emotional support, and continuity of care.

To ensure accountability and thorough improvement, our management team is reviewing this case closely to identify specific areas for additional action and support. We are committed to addressing these challenges effectively and ensuring that all patients feel valued and supported in their interactions with us.

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Healthwatch Greenwich | Jeffrey's Story: "I don't understand why I'm being treated this way for making a simple request"

## Jeffrey's Story: "I don't understand why I'm being treated this way for making a simple request"

For 25 years, Jeffrey has maintained a routine that suits him—collecting his prescriptions in person. This simple act gives him a feeling of control and a sense of independence in managing his long-term condition. However, changes at his GP practice have taken away his autonomy, pushing him into a system that doesn't meet his needs, leaving him feeling disregarded, anxious, and powerless.

Despite his requests to continue receiving paper prescriptions, his GP practice began to automatically issue electronic ones. "I've always collected my green prescriptions," Jeffrey explains, "but suddenly, they're forcing me into electronic ones. Despite clearly telling them again and again that I didn't want these, last week I received a text with barcodes. I've called the surgery countless times, but nothing changes."

For Jeffrey, collecting his prescriptions in person is much more than convenience; it's about maintaining a level of control. Living with a chronic condition, managing prescriptions himself is an important part of his routine. "I want independence and control over my prescriptions," he says, "but they refuse to listen."

The lack of choice from his GP surgery has left Jeffrey feeling bullied into accepting a system he did not choose and does not want, undermining his independence. His efforts to resolve the issue through phone calls to the practice have gotten nowhere. "I've been calling the surgery for days, asking them to stop sending electronic prescriptions, and nobody ever calls me back. They told me if I kept ringing, they would report me to the police," Jeffrey was shocked by the threat. "I was scared to even walk into the surgery after that. I don't understand why I'm being treated this way for making a simple request." He now hesitates to reach out for help from his GP practice even when he feels unwell. "I've done everything I can with the surgery, and I'm just getting nowhere. This whole experience has made me feel hopeless."

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## Provider Response

### Response from GP Practice

Thank you for your feedback. We appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us.

We would like to explain our electronic prescribing service, which was introduced to streamline the prescribing process, enhance patient safety, and improve overall efficiency. Electronic prescribing allows prescriptions to be sent directly from the GP to either your chosen pharmacy or an open prescription to collect from any pharmacy, reducing wait times and minimizing the risk of lost prescriptions. Electronic prescribing was introduced in the UK in the early 2000s, with the NHS Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) becoming operational in 2003.

The move towards electronic prescribing also aligns with broader goals of digitising healthcare and reducing reliance on paper records.

If you prefer paper prescriptions, please inform our reception team or your GP. Please note that paper prescriptions may take longer to process as they require a doctor's signature, and you might have to wait for this to be completed.

For those using electronic prescriptions, you can utilize tokens (a green prescription printout that does not require a signature) or barcodes provided by your GP surgery which can be scanned at your pharmacy to retrieve your prescription quickly and efficiently.

Thank you for helping us improve our services. Your feedback is invaluable to us.

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## Caring for the Carer

Healthwatch Greenwich visited the Carers Social, a group supporting parents of adult children with learning disabilities. In our conversations they shared the outstanding care their loved ones received from services, such as the disability nursing team at Manor Brook GP “Manor Brook is amazing—no complaints there” and some of the care received at Queen Elizabeth Hospital: “...the care [my daughter] received from the doctors and staff [at Queen Elizabeth Hospital] was amazing...”

But not all experiences were positive. Accessing mammograms for their adult children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) proved challenging. Michelle shared her frustration. “I get letters for my own mammogram, but not for my daughter...” Jenny added, “My daughter had to wait a year before they found out she had carcinoma in situ because getting a mammogram for her was so difficult. She ended up getting an ultrasound. SEN women need earlier screenings, and the process has to be more accessible.” Adding to this, getting enough medication is difficult. “They give us just enough medication, but with liquid drugs, some is always lost. When we bring it up, no one listens. We’re left to manage the shortfall ourselves.”

For carers, focusing on their own health needs is secondary to the care of their loved ones. But when their own health needs become pressing, accessible and timely access is crucial. However, for many, this was not the reality. Maria told us she couldn’t access women’s health services and couldn’t find clear information on how to manage her care. “I’m pretty sure I’m going through perimenopause, but the services aren’t clear at all. We need better information about our hormones and what to do when our bodies start changing. It shouldn’t be this hard and time-consuming to figure out.”

For some carers, even basic GP check-ups are difficult to access. Maria shared her frustration. “I need to speak to a doctor who understands my condition, but I can’t request that through e-consult. When I called to explain, they just told me to follow the process. They know we’re carers, but they don’t care about our time. We’re running in circles.”

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## 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, or to request it in large print or easy read format, contact:

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