

Monthly Feedback Report

September

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 care¹.



What did we hear in September?

We heard from 170 people² about their experience of health and care services in Greenwich.

“ Under QE Hospital and due for an operation this month, NHS have been excellent taking care and looking after me. What could be better is getting appointments. Waits for GP and hospital appointments are so long, I waited for 4 months.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ Generally, I am healthy and when they send me invitations for checks I visit them, nurses and doctors are nice and friendly. I am very happy with the service. Also, my GP is very close to me which I like.

GP Practice

¹ Photo above taken from engagement with the Pensioners Forum in August 2024.

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

In this report

About us.....	1
What did we hear in September?.....	1
What Greenwich residents are saying... ..	3
Accessibility of Services	3
Staff Communication and Support	3
Mandy’s Experience: "There are times when I feel I can’t leave Tim with his carers"	5
Disconnected: How Digital Exclusion is Deepening Health Inequalities	8
Contact Us.....	12

What Greenwich residents are saying...

Accessibility of Services

“ I want to change GP as I am not happy with my practice, even when I call at 8 in the morning to book an appointment it is very difficult, I had to call 3 days in a row. After COVID it went downhill.

GP Practice

“ At my GP surgery, it's really easy to book appointments and they're very polite and kind. I've been at the same surgery for 20 years, the staff change but not the quality, they are really good.

GP Practice

“ I submitted a request for my mum who has dementia, but they couldn't assist me. I called them and waited for two hours despite being told I was second in the queue.

GP Practice

Staff Communication and Support

“ Last month I met with a young doctor and she actually spoke to me and connected with me and made sure I got all the tests done. When I went back and saw another doctor I wasn't happy. Overall, it is a good surgery but it goes up and down.

GP Practice

“ Doctors there are great, they are always happy to help when it comes to my mum who has dementia. I feel comfortable asking questions and they don't make me feel like I waste their time.

GP Practice

“ I had a telephone call with my GP a few months ago to have a medicines review, the doctor was very empathetic and understanding, and listened to my concerns.

GP Practice

“ This May before the bank holiday my son who has nephrotic syndrome had a stomachache. At St Thomas hospital they advised us to send a stool sample via our GP and we did. When we contacted the hospital for the results they told us that nobody sent the sample or information. We contacted the GP and they told us that they forgot the sample! We were very worried for many days and I wanted to lodge a complaint but when you have a sick child, a complaint is the last thing in your list of priorities.”

GP Practice

“ Mistakes in the hospital have caused me to have medical issues long term, this happened on 3 occasions. The services are clearly overstretched.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Healthwatch Greenwich | Mandy's Experience: "There are times when I feel I can't leave Tim with his carers"

Mandy's Experience: "There are times when I feel I can't leave Tim with his carers"

*Tim is a 75-year-old man living with dementia, and *Mandy, his 72-year-old wife, has been his primary carer for years. In April, feeling overwhelmed and in need of respite, Mandy contacted Eleanor Care for additional support with Tim's daily needs. But Mandy's experience with the service has led to a catalogue of issues, leaving her feeling more burdened than relieved.

Mandy quickly realised that carers sent by Eleanor Care often didn't show up on time. Most mornings, carers arrived late, disrupting Tim's routine and leaving Mandy to manage his personal care alone.

"We had agreed that we wanted to start his personal care in the morning between nine and nine-thirty, but carers are not getting here until well after 10. That is not good enough. I end up taking care of him as I can't leave him on his own. When I have done everything, that is when the carers will turn up," Mandy explains.

Late arrivals meant that Mandy had already completed Tim's morning routine herself. On arrival, Mandy said the carers would then rush through their tasks, trying to make up time so they could move on to the next client. This hurried approach created a stressful environment for both Tim and Mandy.

Even when carers were present, Mandy found it hard to trust them with Tim's care. She often felt the need to be within earshot, worried about how they were handling Tim.

"There are times when I feel that I can't leave Tim with his carers. I'm always listening out because I'm wondering how they are dealing with him. When you keep telling him to do something and rush him, he gets upset and agitated. So, when I hear this happening, I have to go in there to take over and try and calm him down," Mandy shares.

The lack of continuity of carers makes things worse. New carers often showed up without notice, with no knowledge of Tim's needs and preferences. This constant change left Mandy regularly having to instruct and supervise the carers, rather than using the time to rest or carry out other tasks. "I keep having to tell them what he likes and supervise them, which leaves me very tired and with no time for myself. They are not fulfilling the purpose they were hired for if I have to oversee them all the time," Mandy adds.

For Tim, the constant churn of new carers is not just inconvenient; it's confusing and distressing. Mandy says the carers don't take the time to get to know him or explain what they were doing, and Tim feels overlooked and disregarded.

"Tim gets agitated because they just tell him what to do. They tell him to go to the bathroom or go have a shower. They don't explain what they are doing. There is no effort to communicate with him and get to know him. Because of this, Tim lashes out at them," Mandy explains.

Frustrated with the lack of support and poor quality of care, Mandy contacted Eleanor Care, outlining her experiences and concerns. She never received a response.

Feeling ignored, Mandy contacted an officer at the Royal Borough of Greenwich, who helped escalate her case. Weeks later, Mandy finally received a letter from Eleanor Care. However, their response was not reassuring.

"They told me that visit times have been amended to the times on Tim's task log, but they have never shared his task log with me. I still don't know what is going on. They also told me that two carers will now be assigned for Tim's care, but they didn't tell me who they were. They didn't ask me if these carers are suitable for Tim's needs. They also shared the company policy around lateness. Carers are meant to call the service when they are running late so that they can send someone else, but I still have not had any calls when they are late," says Mandy.

Despite the formal acknowledgment of her complaints, there was little improvement in the service provided by Eleanor Care. Carers continued to arrive late, and Mandy felt the care they provided did not meet Tim's needs, leaving Mandy feeling helpless. "I stopped planning anything because I didn't know what was going to happen, I just had to take each day as it came," said Mandy.

More than 6 weeks after her initial complaint, Mandy started to see improvements, with carers becoming more punctual, supportive, and empathetic. Mandy explained that she continued to escalate her concerns to Eleanor Care, with the support of the council and Healthwatch Greenwich. This persistence led to a meeting with Eleanor Care and Mandy was finally able to share her concerns directly.

Healthwatch Greenwich | Mandy's Experience: "There are times when I feel I can't leave Tim with his carers"

While Tim and Mandy's experience ultimately resulted in positive changes, it highlights the extensive and persistent action required on Mandy's part. The intervention of Healthwatch Greenwich and the local authority were central in escalating her concerns, resources that many residents may not know how to access or have the support to navigate.

Provider Response:

Response from Royal Borough of Greenwich

This report from Healthwatch Greenwich has provided further invaluable insight into the experience of people receiving care.

Thank you for sharing Mandy and Tim's experience of care with Eleanor Care. Whilst I am pleased to hear there has been an improvement in the issues raised, I am sorry that this took significant time and persistent chasing.

We are currently working with our commissioned providers to ensure quality of services provided including listening to peoples lived experiences to review and improve local services. One new homecare service aims to ensure providers listen and work collaboratively with people to provide support at times that matter most to people.

We are committed to continuing to work alongside residents to improve the quality of care and ensure all residents have ways in which they can feedback their experiences.

Disconnected: How Digital Exclusion is Deepening Health Inequalities



In July, Healthwatch Greenwich attended the Pensioners Forum, a group that advocates for the rights and needs of residents over 60. Members shared their personal experiences with local health and care services, and how access to services and resources had become increasingly difficult. *Sarah, an 85-year-old member, told us: "Not everyone can afford a laptop, not everyone can afford a smartphone. How can they expect us to book online appointments or even just self-refer?" Others spoke about not having access to digital devices and how living on low fixed incomes or just the state pension, made the cost of buying digital devices, and internet connectivity impossible.

As health and care services increasingly move online, those without access to digital devices or the internet are left at a disadvantage. This lack of access creates health inequity, particularly for older adults who may already be facing other social and economic challenges.

*Martha, pointed out the growing reliance on digital platforms for accessing information. "The council has the Greenwich Directory online, but what about those of us who can't access it online?"

For many older adults, the inability to navigate or even access online resources means missing out on vital information. This lack of access can lead to delayed care or advice, contributing to poorer health outcomes and widening health inequalities.

Members of the Pensioners Forum told us the move towards greater digital resources and digital as a way to access services contributes to social isolation and a sense of being ignored: **"I've paid taxes all my life and feel I get nothing in return. I feel forgotten."** Not being able to access services online reinforces feelings of being disconnected from the wider community and from local health and care organisations.

Digital exclusion increases existing health inequalities by disproportionately affecting those who are already vulnerable, and the growing shift to online systems for booking appointments, accessing health records, and finding information creates barriers for those who do not have the skills, resources, or opportunities to use these technologies.



Photo of Pensioners Forum.

Provider Response:

Response from Royal Borough of Greenwich

We recognise the feelings that have been expressed in this report and understand that more work needs to be done to build trust between our services and residents who seek to access them. This includes improving the way we design, commission, and improve health and social care services so that they recognise and address barriers to access.

In designing our new Assistive Technology Enabled Care service, we co-designed the service with residents so that concerns around digital exclusion could be addressed from the very start. This included workshops, interviews and regular design sessions with residents. We have since taken the time to ratify what we have learned with different community groups, including the Pensioners Forum and other community groups who face increased barriers to accessing health and social care services. By understanding the barriers people face to accessing services, we aim to deliver an assistive technology service that is accessible to all and showcases the positive contributions that technology can have in health and social care. This includes making provision for those who do not have broadband in the home.

With regards to the Greenwich community directory, similar feedback was received during their design phase. As such, provision has been made for the directory to be accessed through Livewell Greenwich via their telephone helpline. Individuals can therefore benefit from the Greenwich Community Directory without needing to access it online.

On your wider points on digital inclusion, we fully recognise that the direction of many services going online can feel isolating to some. While we as a council can't influence every part of our system, we're fully committed to continuing to offer non-digital channels for all our care and other services. We also offer help for our residents to get online; this includes training Digital Champions at Woolwich Common Community Centre and Clockhouse Community Centre and giving digital devices to digitally excluded residents. We'd love to engage Healthwatch in the design of our digital inclusion strategy, which we'll be engaging on over the next 6 months with residents and partners working across health and social care.

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

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