

Monthly Feedback Report

December

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 December?

We heard from 340 people² about their experience of health and care services in Greenwich.

“ I was at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in the children’s department. The doctor who consulted us was nice- she made my daughter feel comfortable while assessing her ear infection. Everything was good.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ I was at my GP practice and I was seen to very quickly. I also got my blood results quickly. But the waiting time on the phone to get an appointment took long.

GP Practice

¹ Photo above taken from engagement with parents at Willow Dene School in November 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.

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What Greenwich residents are saying...

Accessibility of Services

“ I was at Queen Elizabeth Hospital a few weeks ago to see a gynaecologist. I have a kidney stone but the hospital's treatment isn't very helpful. They could improve their time to administer scans.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ I had a knee tear and in December, I had an MRI scan. But I had to wait three months to receive a consultation which was set for March. In total, it took five months to get treatment. I had to do a lot of phoning. The situation wasn't treated as an emergency but for a knee injury, urgent care is really important.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ I was at the hospital in the phlebotomy department to get blood work done. The work isn't fast but I understand they need to attend to other people and they are trying their best.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ The doctors and nurses provided satisfactory services and making appointments over the phone was easy. I could get an appointment the same day.

GP Practice

Staff Communication and Support

“ The staff are very reassuring, and the service was good. I have never had a bad experience with the staff.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ The receptionists were helpful and my appointment with the doctor was seamless and very fast.

GP Practice

Paediatric Care

“ We were at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in the Children’s department. The staff were okay, but we can’t get appointments on time.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ I was at the hospital a few months ago in A&E. My daughter dropped a water bottle on her foot so I wanted a check-up. We had to wait five hours which is a very long time for a child but the staff were pleasant.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ My child had tonsillitis and the care from our GP was excellent.

GP Practice

“ I like that they have a play area for children but the waiting time is long. They don’t always inform you about the cancellation of appointments- I think they need better communication. The appointment process for a child is also confusing. It felt like we were being taken from one room to another.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

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. It’s great to see some positive comments about our colleagues and the services we offer coming through. We do understand that wait times and poor communication can be very frustrating for our patients. We are working on improving communications across our Trust, having launched new patient focused initiatives such as our Compassion in Care programme that we are rolling out to all our wards. We always encourage patients to ensure that they use the right service to get the medical support they need, which helps us with wait times, and we try our best to see patients as soon as we can, even when we are very busy. 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.qeht@nhs.net.”

Healthwatch Greenwich | Donald's Story: "I don't have an issue with my doctors, but the receptionists talk down to you"

Donald's Story: "I don't have an issue with my doctors, but the receptionists talk down to you"

Donald, 53, has been a patient at his GP practice for over a decade. While he has always found his doctors approachable and professional, his interactions with the reception staff have been frustrating. Living with learning disabilities, Donald finds it hard to communicate and navigate the NHS. Additionally, he carries the responsibility of being a carer for his wife and adult son, both of whom have complex needs. Timely care from his surgery is, therefore, important for his own care and the care of his family.

For years, Donald has found explaining his needs at his GP practice difficult and says front desk staff are often rude and impatient, leaving him feeling dismissed and not listened to. "I don't have an issue with my doctors," Donald explains. "But the receptionists talk down to you."

Donald's learning disabilities mean that tasks like completing e-consults and managing phone appointments are overwhelming. He struggles to use technology and trying to find the right words to use to explain himself over the phone is hard and stressful. "I wish they could be more understanding with me," he says. "Let me speak to a doctor face-to-face because phone calls are really difficult for me."

Feeling unwell, Donald called his practice to book an appointment, he was told he would receive a callback, but the call never came. Donald visited the practice in person, hoping to see a doctor but reception staff refused his request for a face-to-face appointment and told him he had to complete an e-consult. Donald told them he couldn't use the online system, but no one offered to help him complete an e-consult nor offered to make any reasonable adjustments. "I find it hard because they just don't understand my issues. I can't understand the information they give me when it's online like that." Donald explains.

As a long-term patient, he'd hoped that his additional needs would be recognised and accommodated, especially as he'd repeatedly told the practice about his learning disability. But this has not happened. Donald did think about trying to complain, but given his experience, Donald didn't think it would make a difference. "If I complain, they are just going to side with the staff," he says.

Healthwatch Greenwich | Donald's Story: "I don't have an issue with my doctors, but the receptionists talk down to you"

After years of frustration and feeling ignored, Donald decided to change his GP practice. Encouraged by what he had heard, he registered at a different practice. The process of switching wasn't easy for him, and he needed help from others to do so, but the hope of being listened to motivated him to persevere. When Donald couldn't complete the registration form, the practice staff stepped in to help. This warm and friendly reception came as a surprise as this was something his previous surgery refused to do. This experience not only made him feel valued but also highlighted how little support he received from his previous practice. "They should have helped me to fill in the forms because I can't do it myself", Donald recounts.

While changing GP practices was difficult and stressful for him, Donald feels a sense of relief and gratitude for the support he now receives. "The staff at my new surgery are great" he says, "why can't they all be like this?"

The Parent Perspective: Insights and Challenges in Navigating GP and Pharmacy Care

In November, Healthwatch Greenwich joined a coffee morning for parents at Willow Dene School, which supports children and young people with special educational needs. Parents shared mixed views of their experiences with local health and care services. While some had a positive experience, most shared concerns about the accessibility of GP services and being directed to pharmacy services as an alternative.

Parents told us that being referred to pharmacy services by GP practices was sometimes confusing and had unintended consequences, making getting help harder and more complicated. Nimi shared her frustration: “They sent me to the pharmacy for my daughter, then the pharmacist sent me back to the GP, and finally, the GP told me to go to A&E. It’s exhausting going in circles like that.”

Privacy concerns were a recurring theme among parents, especially in a pharmacy setting. Many expressed how the lack of private consultation rooms and the public nature of pharmacies left them feeling exposed, judged, or unsupported. Georgia explained her discomfort:

“I refused to go to the pharmacy and told the [GP] receptionist I wanted to speak to a doctor. She then told me she had to check with her colleague to see if I was allowed [to see a doctor]. I shouldn’t have to explain myself like that. Sometimes you just need to speak to a doctor. I can’t discuss my women’s health issues openly in a public place like a pharmacy.” For Georgia, the idea of disclosing or discussing private medical details in a public space, with strangers in earshot, felt inappropriate and invasive.

Linda echoed similar concerns about her son’s privacy being compromised: “They [GP practice] sent me to the pharmacy, and it felt like a waste of time. I had to take my son’s jumper off in the middle of the pharmacy with everyone watching to check for a rash on his arm.” Linda spoke about feeling uncomfortable and how not having a space to have private conversations with the pharmacist, or for her son to be examined in, felt disrespectful and lacking in dignity. For both mothers, the lack of privacy made it harder for them to trust or feel confident in the care offered by pharmacists.

Linda also highlighted how seeing a pharmacist rather than her GP had ended up costing her money: “Without direct treatment from a GP, I ended up paying for a medication I should have received for free. If I’d seen the GP first, I wouldn’t have had to pay. I don’t have money to spare, and in the end, it was a waste of money because the pharmacist sent me back to the GP anyway.” She explained how the pharmacist advised her to buy the medication, and even though she couldn’t afford it, she didn’t want to delay the treatment she desperately needed, “I couldn’t afford it, but what was I supposed to do?” she asked, “I didn’t want to risk waiting any longer.” Linda is entitled to free prescriptions, but the pharmacy referral bypassed that entitlement, putting her in the position to pay for medication that her GP could have prescribed for free. For people like Linda, whose budgets are already stretched thin, unexpected expenses can have a ripple effect, creating tough decisions on what to cut back on- utility bills, food and other essentials.

Other parents talked about the struggle to get a GP appointment. Mary explained, “I wait outside my GP surgery at 7:30 AM, hoping to get a same-day appointment. I’m not the only one; others do it too. Getting good service at a GP seems like a matter of luck these days”. Linda added, “My mother is 77, and we always book appointments for her; she can’t manage it herself. I think about people who don’t have family to help them—who’s there for them?” Aisha shared similar challenges: “My mum is 66 and doesn’t handle things herself. She doesn’t speak English...”

Despite the challenges, some parents highlighted positive experiences. Katarina talked about her experience with Thamesmead Health Centre, “I’ve changed GPs four times in Greenwich, and this one is by far the best.”

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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