

Monthly Feedback Report

July/August 2024

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.¹



What did we hear in July/August?

We heard from 299 people² about their experience of health and care services in Greenwich.

- “ I attend Robert Owen’s Children Centre and I am very happy with the support that they give. All the girls are great, although, I would like more breastfeeding classes and information about breastfeeding.**
Robert Owen’s Children Centre: Bromley Healthcare
- “ I was referred and then waited 9 months for an appointment. During my appointment, the doctor dismissed my concern and then sent me back to my GP. This doctor at the ENT department at Lewisham Hospital deemed that there was no concern, and the appointment didn't last more than 12 minutes!**
University Hospital Lewisham

¹ Photo above taken from engagement with the Nepalese community in 2023.

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

“ It is an okay GP, but waiting times can be up to an hour and you will be number 15 in the queue, they need more reception staff. One doctor there dismissed my child's earache and then we had to go to A&E.

GP Practice

“ They do not always answer the phone, or you are held on the phone for an hour and then the call just hangs up. They need more receptionists to answer calls.

GP Practice

“ Doctor’s appointments have been difficult to get since COVID, even for telephone appointments with your GP. And when you are on hold in the reception, they finally pick up – to tell you that there are no appointments left. So, what I do is go to A&E when the kids are sick since the GP will not see us. I end up waiting 8–10 hours in the emergency departments but what can I do? When the children are sick, they need to see a doctor.

GP Practice

“ I had to wait two years for an ASD assessment for my non-verbal daughter, and once I did get it, it was an online assessment. It was so frustrating. Since February, I have not yet gotten a referral, or speech and language therapy, or seen a paediatrician! I just want advice and interventions sooner, like advice on what to do at home whilst we wait for appointments.

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

Provider Response:

Response from Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

We are sorry to hear about your frustration. There is a significant increase in referrals for assessments across children's services which is impacting on waiting times. We are working hard to address this and, in the meantime, please contact Oxleas PALS who will be able to give you advice. Their website address is oxl-tr.pals@nhs.net

“ Had a GP referral for my non-verbal SEN child as they had tummy issues but have not gotten any help yet. I have been waiting since June to see a paediatrician, but they said the earliest appointment will be all the way in August. So, whenever there is an issue, we have to go to A&E. But she is non-verbal so whenever we go to the emergency department, she just cries and is unable to explain what is going on for her. The nurse and staff at the hospital do not seem to understand the needs of a SEN child. For example, they want her to stand still or do certain things that a SEN child really struggles with, so she just ends up crying.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ It takes too long to get an appointment and then you just get a phone call, so not seeing a doctor face-to-face. Apart from that I am happy with my GP.

GP Practice

“ It is very easy to book jabs for my son, he is fifteen months old. The GP texted and I booked an appointment with a nurse, it's quick and easy, no problem at all.

GP Practice

“ I'm happy with the service. I prefer the online system as I work, and my husband works. We have two children; it is easier to book appointments this way. I prefer this to waiting on the phone.

GP Practice

Service User Support and Communication

“ I am very happy here. The receptionists are nice, the GPs are nice.

GP Practice

“ I wished I could be seen quicker as they always triage and do not get back to you for at least 2 days. I requested an appointment through the app, but they never got back to me. They only give you appointments if it is life or death, otherwise they do not see you. They also will not refer you. My son is SEN, so he has been biting the skin on his hand a lot, which has been bleeding and getting infected. So I asked them to prescribe cream, but they wouldn't give us cream for his infected hand. I just wished they cared more.

And when my daughter had acne, they kept prescribing antibiotics, and the appointment would not last more than five minutes. It felt so rushed that they didn't care to treat the root cause of her acne; instead, they kept prescribing antibiotics as a quick fix for her skin condition.

GP Practice

“ I have been waiting for them to reach back to me. They used to do regular appointments when the children were younger but now, they only check sleeping issues for them. Before, they offered music therapy and other things for my child with special needs. I wish they would do regular check-ups and communicate with me every six months for the children.

Shooters Hill Children's Centre

“ My adult (24 year old) son with learning disabilities is happy at this care home.

Maylodge Care Home

“ It is impossible to book an appointment, so I had to find out, by myself, my blood test results, nobody got back to me. So, I went onto the NHS app for my blood test results and there were no results there. It seems like the NHS employees couldn't even read their own systems and let me know the result of my bowel screening - they seemed to be confused over the results.

GP Practice

“ Two months ago, I went to Lewisham A&E for my daughter. Staff were very polite and kind, but we had to wait for a long time to be seen.

University Hospital Lewisham

“ I don't even bother to contact my GP. I have to wait 45 minutes to talk to a receptionist, and I don't want to talk to her. Why is she asking questions I don't want to answer?

GP Practice

“ They have very good staff, all very nice. Long waiting times, but everywhere is the same.

GP Practice

“ I gave birth 6 months ago with my second child and overall, I'm happy with the service. I had a similar experience with my first child here.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Rise in Neonatal Deaths: Over One-third of UK Services Rated Red

The latest MBRRACE-UK Perinatal Mortality Surveillance Report³ shows over a third of UK services offering neonatal care received a "red" rating for neonatal deaths in 2022.

Understanding Neonatal Deaths

Neonatal death refers to the death of a baby within the first 28 days of life. These incidents are used as indicators of the quality of care given to the youngest and most vulnerable patients.

The MBRRACE Report Findings

The MBRRACE report categorises Trusts using a color-coded system, from green to red, based on their mortality rates compared to similar organisations. A "red" rating signifies that the Trust's neonatal mortality rates are higher than the average.

Local Results

The Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust (LGT), received a "red" rating, with a neonatal mortality rate over 5% higher than the local network average.

This network includes Croydon University Hospital (rated red), Guys and St Thomas NHS Foundation Trust (rated amber), Kings University Hospital (rated green), Kingston University Hospital (rated yellow), St Georges Hospital (rated yellow), and Epsom and St Helier University Hospital NHS Trust (rated yellow).

Persistent Inequalities in Perinatal Outcomes

The national report shows persistent inequalities in perinatal outcomes. Babies born to mothers in the most deprived areas face a neonatal mortality rate more than double that of babies born to mothers in the least deprived areas. Furthermore, racial disparities continue. Black and Asian babies have significantly higher rates of neonatal mortality than White babies, with Black babies more than twice as likely to be stillborn in comparison to White babies.

A Ray of Hope Amidst Concerns

Despite the rise in neonatal deaths, there have been some positive developments. The national stillbirth rate saw a decline between 2021 and 2022, and no trusts were rated "red" for stillbirths in 2022, showing progress in some areas of maternity care.

³ MBRRACE-UK Perinatal Mortality Surveillance Report: [State of the nation report | MBRRACE-UK \(le.ac.uk\)](#)

Healthwatch Greenwich | Nicky's Experience: "I waited nearly two days for a labour room"

Nicky's Experience: "I waited nearly two days for a labour room"

*Nicky shares her emotional journey, beginning with a pregnancy in 2022.

After discovering she was pregnant with twins, Nicky was excited to share the news with her family. However, at a routine scan at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Nicky was devastated to learn that her babies had no heartbeats.

Nicky later miscarried naturally, and describes her experience.

"It took a long time - about 3 weeks that I was bleeding. And then they asked me to go back just to check that. There they checked that one baby had passed, but the other had not and that I needed to have a DNC operation".

At Queen Elizabeth hospital, Nicky waited anxiously for her procedure. When the wait time neared 12 hours, Nicky became distressed.

"If you have to wait that length of time it can be quite frightening, and obviously it's a very stressful experience. I was alone."

To help support her, staff arranged for Nicky's partner to wait with her, helping her to feel more at ease.

"Someone said that my partner could come in towards the end because I was waiting for such a long time. So that was nice. I was able to have him come in later in the day".

After a couple of months, Nicky had another pregnancy, but tests later confirmed that the baby had a genetic condition incompatible with life after birth, leading her to make the difficult decision to terminate the pregnancy at 16 weeks. Nicky turned to her local hospital, hoping to get an urgent appointment. At Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Nicky waited optimistically for an appointment but when no appointment became available, a midwife referred her to an abortion clinic, knowing that Nicky needed to have the procedure before she was 20 weeks pregnant.

This left Nicky feeling scared - she didn't know this service and felt that there was a lot of stigma attached to abortion clinics.

"you're really afraid, obviously, of what's going to happen to you. You hear all the people outside protesting against abortion. So, when you're in a fragile situation like that, it can feel really uncomfortable" Nicky explains.

At the clinic, Nicky describes the care she received from her midwife and how this left her feeling guilty and anxious about terminating her pregnancy. "She said to me, 'this is solely your decision and no one else's decision'. And I understand that that's just the language that they use. But I think that language should be changed and there should be more of a conversation. Because with that scenario, of course, it wasn't a regular termination out of choice, it was a termination because of a very serious health issue, and I felt extreme amounts of guilt because I didn't want to do it".

Nicky left the clinic feeling unsupported. She wasn't offered any support to cope with her devastating loss, "I didn't get any leaflets or information on how to cope with my grief". Reflecting on this experience, Nicky shares how she now has, "a lot of emotional trauma around that day".

A year later, Nicky was excited to learn that she was pregnant again. However, during a routine clinic check-up at 32 weeks, Nicky's midwife noticed her blood pressure was very high and told Nicky she would need medication to help stabilise this. Despite warning her midwife about her medication allergies, Nicky reacted poorly to the prescribed medication. This left Nicky very distressed about the safety of her baby which only worsened her blood pressure.

When Nicky's condition didn't stabilise, she was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. During her hospital stay, Nicky describes feeling scared and alone, and needing more support and reassurance from staff. "Obviously everyone's coming to check blood pressure and do the medical checks but there needs to be a more human approach to caring for people who are so vulnerable. Nothing's more unfair or more scary than when you are pregnant because you're so afraid that something might happen to you or your baby. Especially, because of what happened to me before".

When Nicky's doctors decided to induce labour, fearing for the safety of her and her baby, she was faced with yet more uncertainty and distress. The hospital didn't have a labour room available, leading to a nearly 40-hour wait for Nicky to have her baby.

"I waited nearly 40 hours, nearly two days, for a labour room, which was really awful because at that point I was contracting, and my waters had broken".

When a room finally became available, it was very cold, causing her severe discomfort.

"I was trembling so much because I was so cold and the pain of everything that was going on and the fear, I clamped my jaw so hard I cracked my teeth, my teeth broke at the back"

Despite her discomfort, Nicky feared speaking up. She felt that if she complained about the room, staff may have made her wait for another room, further delaying her delivery.

After giving birth, Nicky was moved into a room in ward 7. To make her more comfortable, staff fitted her room with a spare bed so her partner could stay with her. However, at midnight, a night nurse woke them up to move them to another room without any explanation, leaving Nicky feeling disregarded and unsupported.

"A lady came in and said, you have to move to another room. And I said Oh, we're just all sleeping here. Please, can we stay? And she said no. You have to move into another room. So, we had to get all my stuff and move to another room which was really stressful because obviously, I was extremely unwell after my caesarean and with preeclampsia"

After a week, Nicky was well enough to be discharged from the hospital but didn't receive any advice or information on how to cope with her traumatic birthing experience, leaving her to try and find support on her own. Through a counselling service, Nicky and her partner have slowly come to terms with what happened to them.

*The name of the abortion clinic was not disclosed by Nicky.

Healthwatch Greenwich | Nicky's Experience: "I waited nearly two days for a labour room"

Provider Response:

Response from Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust

We are very sorry to learn of Nicky's maternity experience. We would like to offer Nicky a meeting to apologise for her experience and review her care individually to fully understand her experience and improve our service.

Breaking Language Barriers: Nepalese Community's Call for Translators

Healthwatch Greenwich met with members of the Nepalese community at Woolwich Centre Library. This informal meeting provided a platform for members of the Nepalese community to share their experiences of local health and care services.

During the meeting, 78-year-old *Bhakti shared difficulties getting the right support for herself and her 83-year-old husband. Bhakti spoke about how hard it was to find accessible information and the complexities of navigating the health and care system. She explained how the lack of information made it very difficult for older people like herself to get the help she needs.

Bhakti pointed out that the existing health and care system often overlooks the needs of older Nepali people who may not speak English. This language barrier makes it even harder to understand medical instructions, follow treatment or medication plans, and access community resources.

Language barriers and the lack of translation services at local GP practices was an issue for many. *Devi, a carer for her 75-year-old mother and a long-standing volunteer for the Nepalese community, spoke about the challenges she and others face. **"There is a significant issue affecting the Nepalese community in our area. When we call the GP to book an appointment, there is no translator available for the Nepalese language, both in the mornings and evenings. This problem is experienced by many Nepalese residents in the Plumstead area, and it is a challenge for those who do not understand English"**. Community members worried that a lack of translation services could inadvertently lead to misunderstandings, inadequate care, and non-compliance with recommended treatments.

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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