

# Monthly Feedback Report

## June

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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 June?

We heard from 198 people<sup>2</sup> about their experience of health and care services in Greenwich.

**“ They are really good at booking in appointments and understanding needs. The only negative is the wait times but overall it is a good place.**

GP Practice

**“ They're okay but there is no communication. I went there for just a screening and I had to do the same tests again. They need to see the patient first before doing an examination.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

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<sup>1</sup> Image taken during our "Raising Awareness of Abuse" session with the Muslim Women's Group in April 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Feedback collected through calls and emails to us, meetings between us and local groups or advocates, research reports and outreach and engagement events.

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## Accessibility of Services

**“ The time management is good. I didn't have to wait too long. They need to improve their systems for when someone has an emergency. If they can prove that someone is having an emergency, they should come up with something because you have to be there at 8 AM sharp.**

GP Practice

**“ I went to my GP. The appointments are quite thorough but it is hard to book appointments. You have to call at 8 AM.**

GP Practice

**“ I had a doctors referral by my GP three weeks ago for a wheelchair. The service could be better by having sooner appointments at a more convenient time with doctors actually present. Also better communication as they did a referral without informing me.**

GP Practice

**“ I visited my GP for flu. The process was smooth but it could have been better if they can reduce the waiting time.**

GP Practice

**“ I went to Queen Elizabeth Hospital at the blood test clinic. The system was orderly, however, there was a long waiting time.**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

## Staff Communication and Support

**“ I went to my GP for my son’s MMR. It was very lovely, she explained the process quickly. I had misunderstood the appointment time by 15 minutes and she still managed to squeeze me in. I have no suggestions, they are very helpful, especially with children.**

GP Practice

**“ My appointment was on time. The staff helping me was helpful and professional. I left feeling good about my service. I was expecting to see my regular GP but he was out of office.**

GP Practice

**“ They were very nice. I had to get a blood and stool test. They did their best, tremendous job and right on time.**

GP Practice

**“ I saw a physiotherapist at my GP practice. It was nice. He did exams on my leg. The staff are very nice and kind. The only suggestion is to make their digital booking platform more accessible.**

GP Practice

**“ I visited my GP and the staff were very helpful, kind and responsive.**

GP Practice

**“ My GP is effective and professional and the practice has a relatively short waiting time.**

GP Practice

**“ I went to my GP surgery for my hyperthyroidism. They attended to my needs and addressed all my concerns.**

GP Practice

**“ I had a concussion and I went to Lewisham Hospital. I waited for 13 hours and the whole time there was no one I could talk to or ask questions in the A&E department. What could be better is to have clearer communication.**

Lewisham Hospital

**“ Very fast and friendly.**

GP Practice

**“ Very little has gone well, my latest problem is that the surgery staff has made an appointment for me with the wrong department at the wrong hospital.**

GP Practice

Healthwatch Greenwich | Ifeoma's story: "...the nurse didn't even know we were still there. I couldn't believe it. We'd been waiting over four hours"

## **Ifeoma's story: "...the nurse didn't even know we were still there. I couldn't believe it. We'd been waiting over four hours"**

Ifeoma, 31, lives in Greenwich with her five-month-old son, Dakari. Living with diabetes and hypertension, she often manages ongoing fatigue and severe migraines, which can make everyday tasks more difficult.

When Dakari developed a high fever that wouldn't come down, Ifeoma, recovering from a migraine, made a difficult trip to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. **"He was very unsettled and crying. I was exhausted. But I had to go."**

At A&E, Ifeoma and Dakari were triaged to the Urgent Treatment Centre. There, they waited four and a half hours to be seen. During this time, Dakari grew increasingly agitated and Ifeoma, feeling faint and overwhelmed, walked him up and down the waiting room, trying to keep him calm.

**"I had no idea the wait would be that long. I wasn't well myself. It was just me and him. At first, I thought maybe something more urgent had come up [for the nurses/doctors], but the hours just kept going by. I was overwhelmed."** There were no updates. No check-ins. No reassurance from staff.

It wasn't until another patient in the waiting room noticed Ifeoma's distress that anything changed. **"She came over and said, 'You've been here too long. He's the youngest baby in this room. You shouldn't still be waiting.' She offered to speak to the nurses for me."**

But she returned with unsettling news. **"She told me the nurse didn't even know we were still there. I couldn't believe it. We'd been waiting over four hours."**

Within 10 minutes of this patient speaking to the nurse, Ifeoma and Dakari were finally called in to see a doctor. **"If that lady hadn't spoken up for me, I honestly think I'd have spent the whole day there, still waiting."**

Though relieved to finally see the doctor, Ifeoma found the appointment rushed. **"Sometimes it feels like they easily dismiss you or do things very fast, maybe because they have a lot of patients to see...but it's not like she wasn't kind, just in a hurry".**

Still unwell herself, Ifeoma struggled to absorb the information she was being given by the doctor. **“I had to ask her to write everything down, what medicines to buy, what to do because I was burning up and just trying to hold it together.”**

The experience left her drained. What should have been a period of reassurance turned into one of frustration, confusion, and exhaustion. **“I was still burning up when I had to go to the pharmacy, but I had to keep going. I even had to ask someone to help get me food, just so I had energy to carry on looking after him.”**

In sharing her experience, Ifeoma hopes it will highlight the need for better systems and care. **“The NHS talks about empathy and person-centred care, but I don’t think it’s really being put into practice. It feels more like a policy, something that sounds good to say, rather than something people actually do.”**

In response to Ifeoma’s experience, we shared these concerns with senior leaders at Greenwich Health, who run the Urgent Treatment Centre at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We are requesting a review of how patients are tracked and followed up to prevent patients from being overlooked in the system.

We are also asking Greenwich Health to consider how staff are supported to recognise and respond to patients who may be in distress, such as parents managing both their own health needs and those of their children. In addition, we have also raised the need for visible, accessible patient information in waiting areas, including guidance on waiting times, where to seek support, and how to escalate concerns if needed.

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## Shannon's story: Cancelled Again, the Impact of Poor Communication

Shannon, 54, lives with reduced mobility from lymphedema in her legs. Over the past year, she has felt more and more uncertain about her care because her appointments have been cancelled repeatedly, often with little or no explanation.

Last year, Shannon was due to see a vascular specialist at Lewisham Hospital. But just before the appointment, it was cancelled. The only explanation given: 'unforeseen circumstances.' Without a reason or follow-up to explain, Shannon was disappointed, confused and worried, unsure whether the appointment was no longer necessary or if something had gone wrong. **"They don't give a reason. All they put in the letter and emails is 'due to unforeseen circumstances.' I just don't think that's good enough."**

The pattern continued. In May this year, a second appointment was scheduled, then cancelled again, with the same vague explanation. **"When I got the appointment for the next month, and that too was cancelled because of 'unforeseen circumstances', it felt like a trend."**

What began as frustration about her own care became real concern when her son's health was affected, too. Timothy, 23, has learning difficulties and autism. He was due to have a telephone consultation with a neurologist at Lewisham Hospital in August. But this, too, was cancelled, again with only 'unforeseen circumstances' as an explanation. **"It's a telephone appointment, set for three months away, and even that's been cancelled. It just seems ridiculous."**

For Shannon, it's not just the cancellation, it's the lack of communication. With no follow-up, no clear explanation, and no clear plan for what happens next, she feels her son's care is being left behind. **"It just makes me cross... [no] chance to speak to the neurologist, to find out if there's more we can do for him..."**

Shannon's experience is not unique. Healthwatch Greenwich has heard similar feedback from other residents, particularly those with long-term conditions or caring responsibilities. Repeated cancellations without explanation or rescheduling. **"I know hospitals are busy and sometimes appointments do need to be cancelled. But don't just say 'unforeseen circumstances.' Tell me why. Be honest with patients."**

Shannon's experience highlights a wider concern: repeated cancellations without explanation, no follow-up, and no clear next steps in care. These issues can lead to delays in treatment, increased stress for patients and carers, and ultimately, potentially worse health outcomes. For Shannon and Timothy, both of whom have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, repeated cancellations create real and unequal barriers to care.

To support Shannon, we provided clear, accessible information on how to raise her concerns directly with the Trust. We also escalated these issues directly to Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust. This case also feeds into our wider work, shaping recommendations on hospital communication and access to care for residents living with disabilities and caring responsibilities.

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## Raising Awareness of Abuse: Strengthening Community Safety in Woolwich

In April, Healthwatch Greenwich partnered with the Greenwich Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) to run an awareness session with the Muslim Women's Group at a local community centre. The session aimed to open up conversations about abuse and safeguarding in a way that felt respectful, relevant, and culturally appropriate.

Recognising that different communities face different barriers to accessing safeguarding information or services, and that culturally specific dynamics will affect how abuse is understood, experienced, or reported, we worked closely with Muslim volunteers from our Healthwatch team to co-develop the content. Their insights into cultural and religious context helped us avoid assumptions, use language that resonated, and explore safeguarding concerns respectfully.

The session was delivered by one of our trained volunteers who shared the group's cultural background. Her presence played a key role in building trust, helping women feel safe enough to ask questions and share their views. Feedback from the session made it clear that having someone who understood their values, practices, and lived experiences made a real difference to how the information was received.

### Breaking the Silence, Building Confidence

For most, this was the first time they had been invited to learn about abuse and safeguarding in a structured and supportive way. In this safe space, a range of concerns surfaced. Women shared worries about what happens if abuse is reported. Questions like **"Can I report abuse without giving my name?"** and **"Will social services take children away if I report something?"** reflected both confusion and fear. These questions were shaped not only by a lack of information but also by previous negative experiences with services and mistrust in the consequences of asking for help.

There was also strong interest in recognising abuse in everyday situations, especially in close or trusted relationships. Women asked, **"Is it abuse if it happens within marriage?"** and **"Who can I speak to if I'm unsure whether something is abuse?"** While all the women found the session helpful, they also said they wanted more. More opportunities to ask questions, increase their understanding, and begin to build greater trust in the services there to support them.

### **A Shared Priority**

This work is a high priority for the Greenwich Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB), which is committed to making sure that safeguarding information and support reaches every part of the community. SAB recognises that improving understanding of safeguarding, tackling misinformation, and breaking down barriers to support are essential to protecting vulnerable adults and strengthening safety across the borough.

At Healthwatch Greenwich, we see firsthand how people's experiences, fears, and concerns shape whether they seek help or feel able to speak out. Our involvement in this work is grounded in our mission: to make sure that everyone in Greenwich can access safe, respectful, and inclusive care. Together with SAB, we're helping make safeguarding not only available, but visible, trusted, and understood.

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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:

- [Caitlin@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk](mailto:Caitlin@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk)
- Telephone: 020 8301 8340
- Email: [Info@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk](mailto:Info@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk)
- Website: <http://www.healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk/>
- Twitter: [@HWGreenwich](https://twitter.com/HWGreenwich)
- Facebook: [healthwatchgreenwich](https://www.facebook.com/healthwatchgreenwich)