

## 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.



Our new batch of volunteers during their induction.

## What did we hear this month?

We heard from 262 Greenwich residents about their experience of health and care services.

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**“ I was extremely disappointed. Awful service!**

Dental Clinic

**“ ...My iron levels were extremely low. I waited for approximately one hour and the service was good...**

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

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## What Greenwich residents are saying...

### Primary Care

**“The doctors do not have time to see you when you are in their room. The GP doesn’t have the patience to listen to my health needs.**  
GP Practice

**“Healthcare at Ferryview Centre has been great so far. They have always been friendly and very welcoming, always putting me at ease.**  
GP Practice

**“I go to my GP for ongoing mental health issues. They are extremely helpful and understanding.**  
GP Practice

**“I have always had been well looked after at Ferryview. All the staff from the doctors to the receptionists are lovely, always giving me their listening ears. Receptionists are respectful and kind.**  
GP Practice

**“I am wheelchair-bound and I love Ferryview GP because of its accessibility. The GP is always friendly and happy to see me.**  
GP Practice

**“Unhappy about waiting times, they do answer the phone quickly but no face-to-face appointments.**  
GP Practice

### Dentistry

**“I received ill-fitting dentures and a filling for a broken tooth twice. I paid over £400 for rubbish; I am really annoyed.**  
Dental Clinic

**“I was extremely disappointed. Awful service!**  
Dental Clinic

## General Hospitals

- “ The waiting times at Queen Elizabeth Hospital A&E are too long!**  
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- “ The waiting time in Queen Elizabeth is too long. I was waiting to see a neurologist for my constant headache. I had already seen my GP and they referred me to QEH. They could have asked me to go and see someone earlier. My headache worsened to the extent that I could not open my eyes, so I was rushed to the A&E.**  
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- “ I was happy with my service at Queen Mary’s hospital. I took my son for a blood test.**  
Queen Mary’s Hospital
- “ I went to A&E and received an iron transfusion. My iron levels were extremely low. I waited for approximately one hour and the service was good.**  
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- “ I have chronic lower back pain. I was referred to the hospital by my GP. The consultant was attentive, and I was given a scan and examined. I was also referred to physiotherapist.**  
Queen Mary’s Hospital
- “ My sister had a mental breakdown. We went to A&E for help. She was quickly sedated to calm her down. She was assessed when she woke up. I was happy with the service provided.**  
University Hospital Lewisham
- “ I had a good experience at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The staff at the Outpatient Clinic were very respectful and very professional.**  
Queen Elizabeth Hospital

## Paul's Experience: "We've lost trust in the hospital, they failed Becky"

Paul and his wife live in Greenwich with their 49-year-old daughter Becky. Becky has a rare neurological condition and relies on a daily cocktail of 11 different prescribed medications to keep her well. *"With Becky's condition it's really important she takes her medication on time,"* Paul said. *"It cannot be skipped at any cost."*

After a fall at home Becky broke her leg and was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital as she needed surgery. *"The first thing we did was to give the list of medication to the paramedics taking her because of the severity of her health issues. It is life or death matter."* Paul added.

Becky's parents emphasised the importance of her medications to staff during the ambulance ride to the hospital. Ambulance staff advised her parents to speak to hospital staff on arrival. On admission, Becky's parents told hospital staff about the importance of her medications.

*"When she got admitted to the ward – once again, we informed the nurses about her medication, but they ignored us"* said Paul *"Even Becky herself told them, but they just waved us away – dismissed us – as if what we were telling them wasn't important. We kept trying to tell the nurses on the ward, but they just didn't want to know."*

Becky didn't receive her prescribed medication and after surgery, Becky's health took a turn for the worse. Becky was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit. *"I was seeing my daughter lose her life day by day. We were losing her because no one listened to us."* After a worrying time, Becky recovered and a few weeks later, was well enough to go home.

Both Becky and her parents were left traumatised by the experience. *"We've lost trust in the hospital, they failed Becky and put her at risk because they didn't listen to us about her medication. We felt helpless. We kept trying to tell them how important her medication was – but they just ignored us."*

Becky is fearful about needing to be admitted to Queen Elizabeth hospital in the future. *"I know I will fall again in the future. If I do fall, I'll probably break a bone again because my medication is making my bones more fragile,"* said Becky. *"Sooner or later, I will fall again. I'd like to think that I could go into my local hospital safely and not risk ending up in intensive care because they won't listen to me about what prescribed medication, I need to take to keep me well."*

**Provider Response:**

**Response from Lewisham and Greenwich Trust**

We are working hard to improve our patient experience and welcome all feedback that helps us on our improvement journey. It's gratifying to see some of the positive feedback coming through this month from those who have attended Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and who have been treated by our dedicated and attentive colleagues, and from those who have been seen promptly despite local and national emergency pathways being challenged overall.

We're very sorry to hear about Becky's experience when she attended QEH. We take what has happened here very seriously and at present we are investigating the circumstances that led to this. As we're keen to address the medication issue directly with Becky, Paul and the family, we'd encourage them to contact us via PALS if they haven't already, as this will help with our investigation and allow us to issue them with a response directly. PALS for QEH can be reached at [pals.qeht@nhs.net](mailto:pals.qeht@nhs.net) or on the phone at 020 8836 4592.

As ever, we are grateful to Healthwatch and all their service users for the help and feedback they provide.

## **Fayola's Experience: "I need help, Minika needs help, but no one is helping us."**

Fayola, a Nigerian mum, lives in Thamesmead with her five children and husband, including 20-year-old daughter Minika.

Minika has Autism and several complex medical conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, and kidney disease. Fayola must make sure Minika is kept warm as this, along with multiple medications, helps to manage her conditions. Despite her challenges, Minika is a happy young woman who enjoys going to a day centre, listening to music, and making Tik Tok videos.

In November, Fayola's boiler stopped working leaving the family of seven without heating. *"I called them (Hexagon Housing Association) in early November and told them the situation, I told them that Minika has serious medical issues and that this is urgent. They told me they couldn't get someone out for weeks, not until December 8<sup>th</sup>,"* Fayola told Healthwatch Greenwich in early January.

Despite repeated calls and explaining how medically vulnerable Minika is – Fayola was told nothing could be done and they'd just have to wait. *"I was so tired of calling them again and again, they didn't care about how vulnerable Minika is. They don't consider her a priority,"* said Fayola. *"I was so frustrated and disappointed."*

For weeks, the family had no heating. Her youngest son's school got in touch, concerned he was falling asleep during class. Fayola explained he was too cold at night to sleep and went to school tired every day. The school contacted the housing association urging them to repair the boiler. The housing association didn't respond.

Minika's day centre reported she was shaking and keeping her jacket on. When Fayola told them she had no heating, the day centre contacted the housing association. The housing association didn't respond. In the end, Minika became unwell.

*"She was shaking because the cold got to her so badly, she wouldn't stop. She came home [from the day centre] and I took her to the hospital [Queen Elizabeth] straight away. They admitted her because she was so sick. She's so unwell she won't take her medication; she won't speak or respond to me or even move. This is not my daughter,"* Fayola recalled *"Usually she's always talking, making videos on her phone, and listening to music. She's lost 8 kilos because she isn't eating. If I showed you a video of her before, you'd be very surprised."*

Minika has been in hospital for almost two months and Fayola stays in the hospital to look after her.

*"I'm so angry because all of this has been caused by the housing association, they have caused this issue. If they had sorted this out, my daughter would not be here. We've been here for more than a month, she is angry and irritated, sitting here not talking or responding and dribbling. She's never done this before. I'm not happy. I want my daughter well again. I can't walk away, I can't go anywhere, the rest of the children are at home wondering how she is, they are crying asking me when we're going to be home. My husband is at work, so the older ones are watching the younger ones. He comes here after work to see her but that's it."*

Fayola sleeps beside her daughter's hospital bed in a reclining chair.

*"It's affecting me a lot inside. I'm not happy. I ask myself what's happened to my daughter. There's been no improvements. I am just stuck here for nearly two months watching her, looking after her. I am trying to keep her moving, I get her up and sit her on the chair. I don't want her to get weak. I've only been home once in all this time because they [the ward staff] had someone come to watch her but they've told me they're too short staffed on the ward to do that now, so I can't have a break. I have to go to the canteen to buy food, even leaving her to do that is not easy and stressful, and it's expensive paying for food from the hospital canteen every day. We don't have money for that, we can't afford it."*

*"I've been waiting for a phone call or email [from Minika's social worker] but nothing, no one has come back to me. I need someone to come in and sit with Minika so I can just have a break," said Fayola. "I need help, Minika needs help, but no one is helping us."*



## **Shweta's experience: "If only a GP had seen me in person, I would have my degree with no delays."**

Shweta, an international student from Nepal, had injured her right hand making carrying out daily living tasks difficult and writing or typing for her studies impossible.

*"I couldn't even move my hand. I couldn't write papers for my final terms,"* said Shweta, who had come to London for her master's study. *"I was more and more worried about my studies as I had come far away from my family for my studies, but I couldn't complete my assignments."*

The pain worsened over a few days, and she tried booking a GP appointment. *"The pain became so severe that I could not even move my fingers."* Shweta was offered a remote consultation over the phone. Shweta wanted a face-to-face appointment but was refused. *"I was very serious about this matter and I asked the call operator [receptionist] how I would get answers to my problems if I only talked with the GP via phone. I couldn't even move my fingers, so I really needed an X-ray and an in-person checkup."*

Despite making repeated requests, all that was offered were telephone consultations. Shweta said the phone consultation didn't help.

*"Since I have paid immigration health surcharges which is several hundred pounds, I was told I have the right to see a doctor if unwell. But I couldn't. All I was offered was a couple of conversations with the GP via phone. In my painful experience, it wasn't enough."*

Shweta couldn't complete her assignments on time and had to request an extension for her master's dissertation lengthening her time in the UK and creating an additional financial burden.

*"If I had received proper treatment on time, I would have got my degree on time with no delays. My GP didn't schedule an in-person appointment for my hand injury. It was a very serious situation where I had to take an extension for my Master's dissertation which caused my degree to be delayed by months,"* said Shweta. *"For an international student like me, this is a big setback for my career and my family. People like me come to the UK for education after paying thousands of pounds in college fees, visa charges and NHS surcharges. I was not asking for anything from the NHS for free – I was asking for a service I'd already paid for, to see a doctor in person and not just on the telephone – and I still couldn't get it."*

## 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 further development is needed.

## Contact Us

For more information on our feedback report, or to request it in large print or easy read format, contact:

- [Chandan@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk](mailto:Chandan@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)



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