



SEL Healthwatch Q3 Insight Report

What people are telling us about their experience of health services

February 2024

healthwatch

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About south east London Healthwatch

The six local Healthwatch organisations in south east London serve as independent enablers and champions of public and patient voice in health and care services. We gather knowledge on health inequalities from individuals and diverse communities in the region and official data sources. Together, we form the south east London Healthwatch (SELHW) collaboration, sharing information, expertise, and learning, while maintaining our individual voices at borough level. Work and project priorities within each individual Healthwatch are based on regular monitoring and patient feedback

SELHW utilises our influence and statutory functions to make a difference by encouraging action at all levels within the Integrated Care System (ICS). We focus on addressing health challenges and supporting service transformation in general practice, hospital, dental, pharmacy, optometry, and home-based care. By collecting people's opinions and perspectives and sharing them with decision makers, SELHW ensures that people's views shape and improve the care they receive.

Setting the Stage: Introduction to the Report

This report sheds light on the various health services individuals discussed with south east London Healthwatch between October and December 2023.

The feedback is sourced by SELHW from calls, emails, meetings, online reviews, outreach, and engagement events.

While it is important to note that the feedback received from patients and their carers is presented as shared, it is essential to acknowledge that some feedback may lack detailed information or context. Nonetheless, we highly value patients' and carers' time and effort in sharing their views and experiences with us. This report aims to provide a balanced representation by presenting an overview of both positive and negative feedback, enabling a comprehensive understanding of patient experiences.

The information and patient quotations included in this report have been sourced from previously published Place Healthwatch reports. As part of our commitment to transparency and accountability, we have provided

service providers and commissioners with the opportunity to review and respond to the findings.

For more information about SELHW, please visit [south-east-london-healthwatch](#).

Who we heard from

We have gathered valuable insights from individuals across south east London regarding their experiences with health services. By actively listening to the voices of the community, we have gained a better understanding of their perspectives and the challenges they encounter when accessing healthcare. Listening to feedback from various segments of the community is a top priority for SELHW. This helps us understand the complete picture and provide valuable feedback to service providers, enabling improvement.

From September to December 2023, SELHW actively engaged with over 3000 people. These engagements included groups that are typically underrepresented, such as:

- Residents from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds
- Residents living with disabilities or long-term conditions
- Residents with additional linguistic needs
- Residents residing in the 20% most deprived areas
- Refugees and migrants
- Unpaid carers
- LGBTQ+ groups

By actively connecting with these cohorts, SELHW tries to ensure that the voices and perspectives of these community members are included and considered in health service delivery and decision-making processes.

What we are hearing about services

Across SEL, people continue to have mixed experiences with their care. This is due to a range of factors, including their level of familiarity with health services, ability, or capacity to navigate the system, information received

before, during and after care or treatment, the accessibility of services, the coordination of care and relationships with staff providing services. A key theme across all services is raising awareness and improving access to healthcare services and information for diverse populations.

Some highlights of positive feedback received about services in SEL are:

1. Patients expressed satisfaction with their dental services, highlighting the quality of service, good communication, and friendly staff.
2. Patients rated dental practice staff positively, emphasising their friendliness, competence, and effective treatment explanations.
3. In community pharmacies, people had high awareness of services related to flu, minor illness, blood pressure and sexual health.
4. The presence of quiet rooms at King's College Hospital helps children with learning disabilities and their parents feel more comfortable during the waiting period.
5. There is confidence in the hospital discharge process

Key Themes and Concerns

Access to Services

- In dentistry, patients face long waiting times and difficulty securing appointments. This includes challenges related to registering at or contacting a dental practice.
- When it comes to GP services, long waiting times for appointments, difficulty getting through on the phone, and limited appointment availability are common concerns. Challenges with online registration forms and identification requirements have also been reported.

- Hospitals present challenges in accessing services online and receiving support from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). Issues with long waiting times, telephone accessibility, parking, and referrals being cancelled or rejected without notice or justification have been raised.
- In the case of hospitals, individuals reported difficulties in accessing their medical records, with instances where records were lost entirely, indicating potential gaps in administrative processes
- Concerns about digital platforms like EPIC and My Chart have been expressed, with reports of missing information and messages mistaken for spam.
- Individuals requiring learning disability support experience long waiting times for appointments with specialists, leading to delays in important assessments.

Awareness of Services

- There is notably low awareness of Community Pharmacy services among Black British residents when compared to White residents.
- Across all communities, there is a lack of awareness regarding support services such as stop smoking, substance misuse, and weight management.
- People asked for hospitals to provide written communication, such as leaflets, in addition to verbal information from staff to ensure better understanding among patients.

Communication and Administration

- In dentistry, providing clear explanations before and during treatment is crucial. Additionally, ensuring accessibility to appointments and transparency in terms of costs are important factors to address.
- Patients provided negative feedback regarding the management of dental services, including rude reception staff and poor communication around appointment cancellations and rescheduling

- Hospitals must work on bridging communication gaps amongst different departments and between hospitals and general practice. These gaps often lead to delays in referrals, medication administration, and treatment explanations.
- Recognising and accommodating diverse communication requirements of patients, such as language preferences and different formats of information, while offering multiple opportunities for conversation is essential.
- Providing guidance to patients and their carers on self-managing conditions during their hospital stay is crucial, especially for those facing long waits for treatments like physiotherapy.
- Some patients do not view discharge preparation as a distinct process from completing their treatment, often relying on confirmation from doctors to leave. Addressing this perception and ensuring appropriate preparation for a smooth transition after treatment is important.
- Problems related to online communication, including challenges with phone accessibility, missing information on digital platforms, and messages being mistaken for spam, need to be addressed
- More needs to be done to provide clear information about the Hospital Transport service, improve booking convenience, and enhance overall flexibility
- During clinical appointments in hospitals, patients felt communication and treatment explanation were poor, and some people felt the appointments were rushed
- When it comes to supporting individuals with learning disabilities, there is a need for a better approach and understanding, particularly in the case of children with LD.
- Offering simplified explanations to children with learning disabilities can significantly support their understanding of what is happening during their healthcare journey.
- Difficulties identified when trying to update GP registration after a name change during the transition process. Unfortunately, the practice mistakenly registered two separate patient records, one of which lacked any relevant information. Consequently, this situation created

complications and obstacles leading to challenges in accessing her medical records.

Equity Issues and Access Disparities:

- There are equity issues in dental care access based on age, ethnicity, disability, and caregiving responsibilities.
- Some individuals mentioned choosing private dentistry as an alternative due to long waiting times, highlighting the need for fair and timely access to dental care for all, regardless of background or financial situation.
- Although there is high awareness of services related to flu, minor illness, blood pressure and sexual health, there is notably lower awareness of services provided by Community Pharmacy among residents identifying as Black.
- Trans people reported experiencing issues related to name changes when it came to wait lists for ADHD/ASD assessments and the transfer of medical records across different practices and services. Some participants were removed from wait lists without being informed after changing their names, and they only found out when they inquired directly about their places on the list.

Patient Experience

- In dentistry, the staff's friendliness and perceived professional competence are positively acknowledged by patients.
- When it comes to general practitioners (GPs), patients report good attitudes displayed by the staff.
- In hospitals, patients' experiences vary, with some feeling uncomfortable due to perceived uncaring or unhelpful interactions with staff. There are instances where patients do not feel prioritised or that their voices are heard.
- Users of primary care and mental health services expressed growing disillusionment with their experience of care. We received reports of people stopping actively seeking out care due to ongoing issues.

Other Issues

- Patients encountered issues with registering in primary care without ID. NHS guidelines do not require patient documentation when registering unless access to online facilities is required; despite this, Practises continue to request ID and proof of address as a registration requirement.

People's Own Voices

Dentistry



“Every time I go, something else goes wrong. I am not happy with my dental treatment. The dentist fitted two temporary crowns with the intention of replacing them with permanent ones. This hasn't happened.”



GP Services



“Hard to make an appointment. Everything has to be classified as an emergency to get a same day appointment.”

“It's impossible to get a GP appointment. I don't understand why, because when I go past the surgery it's always empty – I don't know what the doctors are doing.”

“Good communication between different GPs. They prioritised my treatment here because of my condition.”

“The GP and staff are attentive and supportive of my needs. I am extremely happy here”

“I am on new medication, and I am struggling to breathe and sleep. I have tried for three days to call the surgery to make an appointment and waiting over 30 minutes each time. I had to visit the surgery in person. I think that with our age and our problems, we should have a bit more help. You have to wait half an hour on the phone to try to make an

appointment on the phone, and sometimes when they answer they say you have to try again tomorrow. For me to walk it's really a struggle, so I can't go to the surgery easily."

"Life is despairing. I'm struggling a lot. It's always that they want people to pass away or have a big accident before they try and help people."



Hospitals



"Nice and clean. Lots of smiling staff. Facilities for getting a tea and coffee."

"The treatment plan has been well explained and executed."

"Not sure who to contact, need better clarity over the phone and email. Knowing who to contact for questions after the appointment?"

"Communication between departments and GP could be better."

"I am at my wits end. I have had very bad pain in my arm for over 6 years and still have not been properly diagnosed or treated. I have only been given phone appointments by Kings Hospital and not being properly examined. I'm trying to work still but every day is a struggle with this constant pain. I have just had my next phone appointment cancelled by Kings Hospital and rebooked for July '24."

"The new system disables those of us without visual and digital privilege. I have attempted to book an appointment in excess of thirty times. I have written twice to PALS without any response. All responsibility is left with patients who are ill, stressed and confused."



Mental Health Services

“Lambeth Talking Therapies is the best service, but the Single Point of Access is useless. – absolute waste of time and resources. I was referred to Talking Therapies and I expressly asked to be contacted via email, as I don’t always answer phone calls because of my mental health. They ignored this and called me anyway.



Next steps

- SEL Healthwatch will share the findings contained within this report at various ICS and NHS South east London ICB boards and committees. SEL Healthwatch has shared these insights with the relevant providers and commissioners in their boroughs. Healthwatch SEL has also organised several informal meetings with partners to discuss the issues of concern and identify actions to take forward. We continue identifying opportunities to share our findings within the health and social care system.

We will also:

- Use our social media platforms, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to raise awareness of our organisations and the work that we do
- Continue to engage service users in innovative ways to obtain patient feedback and experience of health and social care services and collect reviews using different methods and actions

References

This report draws on the publicly available Healthwatch reports below. You can read them by clicking on each report title.:

[Patient Experience Report 2023/2024 Quarter 3 | Healthwatch Bromley](#)

[Hospital Discharge Report | Healthwatch Lambeth](#)

[What did we hear in December 2023? What action has been taken? | Healthwatch Greenwich](#)

[What did we hear in November 2023? What action has been taken? | Healthwatch Greenwich](#)

[What did we hear in October 2023? What action has been taken? | Healthwatch Greenwich](#)

[Continuing Healthcare Report | Healthwatch Lambeth](#)

Championing what matters to people – Upcoming Healthwatch Reports–:

- Ophthalmology report – Healthwatch Bromley
- BAME Carers report – Healthwatch Greenwich
- Caring for Carers report – Healthwatch Greenwich
- Maternity care for asylum seeking and migrant women in South East London – Healthwatch Greenwich
- Mental Health recovery experiences of Black African and Black Caribbean men – Healthwatch Lambeth
- Maternity services – Healthwatch Lambeth
- Safeguarding – Healthwatch Lambeth
- Trans Health Inequalities – Healthwatch Lewisham
- Adults with Learning Disabilities – Healthwatch Southwark

For further information on this report contact Folake Segun, Director SEL Healthwatch (folake@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk).



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