

Championing what matters to people

South East London Healthwatch Insight Report
November 2023

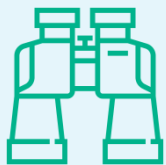


About us

The six local Healthwatch across south east London are the independent enablers and champions of public and patient voice in health and care services. We build our knowledge of health inequalities from people and the diverse communities of south east London, as well as from official data sources. We call our collaboration South East London Healthwatch (SELHW). SELHW share information, expertise and learning and work together to add value to joint conversations and activity while also maintaining a strong and independent local voice.

We use our influence and statutory functions to make a difference, encouraging action at all levels of the Integrated Care System (ICS) to tackle health and transform services, such as general practice care, hospital care, dental care, care delivered in pharmacies, by optometrists and in people's own homes. We find out what matters to people and help make sure their views shape the support they need by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

Each local Healthwatch is funded by their Council through either a grant or a contract.



Our vision

A world where everyone can get the health and care they need.



Our mission

To illuminate people's voices make sure their experiences help make health and care better.

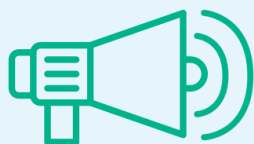


Our values

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Our Reach 2022–2023

Reaching out



13,047 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

Over 24,207 people

came to us for clear advice and information.

Making a difference to care



Collectively South east London Healthwatch published **76 reports** during 2022–2023 about the improvements people would like to see in health and social care services.

Health and care that works for people



Across south east London, we are present in every community.

We're lucky to have **273 outstanding volunteers** who kindly gave up **974 days** during 2022–2023 to make care better for our community by collecting and understanding local people's views.

Together we employ **17 staff** to deliver the Healthwatch service to our communities.

Quarter 2, 2023



Between July–September 2023 **3,585** people told us their experiences of health services with us

Our Listening in 2022–2023

We understand the significance of actively involving communities that might be less commonly or seldom reached out to. People and communities know what they need the most and can often face different challenges.

Our commitment is to listen to the stories and opinions of those who have worse health outcomes and understand their lives. We include their input and magnify their perspectives to ensure that health and social care services remain fair and available to everyone.

In this year we have:

- Sought to understand the maternity experiences of women and birthing people who are Refugees, recently migrated or asylum-seeking, who have been shown to have disproportionately poorer outcomes and experience of maternity care.
- Connected with Latin American communities to grasp their struggles with health and social care access. Insights obtained helped spotlight their access barriers and informed recommendations for decision makers and service providers.
- Concentrated on engaging Black African and Caribbean communities, aiming to improve mental health services. We explored challenges they encounter through user experiences, giving life to their stories.
- Facilitated mental health service users to voice their primary care experiences at system level. Their personal stories highlighted the challenges they experienced, emphasizing the urgent need for improvements.
- Continued to ensure equal access for those uncomfortable with digital tools due to reasons like poverty, language barriers or lack of confidence. The growing shift to digital communication has prompted service providers to reconsider their language and methods.
- Interviewed parents of children with autism and special needs about GP visits, revealing the lack of support. They emphasized better communication and involving them to ease their children's distress during appointments.
- Collaborated with the Refugee Council to organise an online workshop about NHS services. This workshop was to ensure Ukrainian refugees felt more self-assured about accessing GP and Pharmacy services.
- Collaborated with Southwark Travellers and Refugee Group in a successful grant application aimed at enhancing health access for the traveller community.
- Continued our ongoing Enter & View programmes across supported living and care home for the elderly, those with mental health issues and people with Learning difficulties.

What people have told Healthwatch

This report draws on the feedback from people who told Healthwatch about their experiences of health services. It covers the period between July and September 2023.

Services cannot make improvements without hearing the views of people and communities. That is why we make listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve.

The services in this report are those that people talk about. A snapshot of both positive and negative feedback is provided for each service.

The information, quotations and case studies have all been previously published at Place and providers have had the opportunity to see the information and to respond to the appropriate Healthwatch.



Dentistry

	POSITIVES
Healthwatch Bromley	<p>73% of service users rated the quality of health professionals positively. Comments included feedback regarding their skills and ability to provide great service.</p> <p>45 people left positive feedback about their experience with dental services. Positive comments include remarks about how calm and comfortable the experience was.</p>
Healthwatch Lewisham	<p>50 reviews of dental services were made with 96% being positive. 96% of reviews that covered booking appointments were positive.</p>
	NEGATIVES
Healthwatch Bromley	<p>A small number of people (4) reported difficulty in booking appointments at their dentist. They cited dissatisfaction with the process of booking an appointment.</p> <p>A minority of service (4) users were disappointed with their experience with their dentist. Comments included negative feedback about trying to book an appointment to see a dentist.</p>
Healthwatch Lewisham	<p>The top concern people had was affordability (83). People highlighted their reluctance to get the treatment they needed as prices are extremely high. They mentioned getting overcharged for treatment before and it being a long process to prove their case.</p> <p>Appointment availability: 52% of reviews cited appointment availability as negative. Residents stressed the months long wait for an appointment.</p> <p>Others spoke about not being allowed to book emergency appointments which led to their condition worsening, long term and/or irreversible damage occurring and having to go to A&E or pay for private dental services.</p>



What Can Make A Difference

- Better explanations to patients as to why the cost of the treatment is the amount it totals.
- Recommend ways to make it more affordable, such as paying in instalments, with an insurance plan or asking if they're on relevant benefits.
- Improving signage to clarify costs for dental treatments..

Pharmacy

	POSITIVE
Healthwatch Lewisham	<p>88% of reviews that covered staff attitudes were positive. Residents were exceedingly pleased with their pharmacy staff's customer service</p> <p>67% of reviews that covered medicine management were positive.</p> <p>82% of reviews that covered communication around prescriptions within pharmacies were positive.</p>
	NEGATIVE
	<p>61% of reviews that covered waiting times at the premises were negative. Residents were unhappy at having to stand in long queues for over 30 minutes before receiving their medication.</p> <p>71% of reviews were negative about service delivery/opening times. We were told by people that they would appreciate pharmacies updating their opening and closing times so that they did not end up confused and disappointed.</p>



What Can Make A Difference

Updating opening and closing times online and with in-person signage is important. Many people build rapport with pharmacies and instances of not updating their opening hours can break this trust resulting in the pharmacy no longer being seen as reliable and losing loyal service users.



OTHER SERVICES

<p>QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL MATERNITY DEPARTMENT</p>	<p>POSITIVE <i>"My wife recently gave birth at QEH, the quality of care we received was first class. We had to make many trips to the hospital during our pregnancy and we always felt very well looked after by knowledgeable staff who made us feel very safe and looked after. The doctors and midwives provided the most superb support, so much so that we look forward to having our second child at the hospital".</i></p>
<p>OUTPATIENTS</p>	<p>POSITIVE <i>"I went to this hospital to take one of my residents for her appointment. The staff couldn't have been more helpful, we got seen to quite early and the receptionist was very helpful with contacting the transport company to take us home." (Queen Elizabeth Hospital)</i></p> <p><i>"Very helpful, kind and supportive people at every stage. I even got a sandwich and coffee after the endoscopy, which was much needed after fasting for 24 hours" (QE)</i></p> <p>NEGATIVE: <i>"I was charged £80 for dropping of a patient. I only stopped for about 4 minutes to accompany a vulnerable patient. PALS is ridiculous and do not respond to emails" (Queen Elizabeth Hospital)</i></p> <p><i>"Went to have a blood test done and the phlebotomy department decided to pack away their equipment before the end of their shift. I'm a nurse and they really thought they could fob me off and tell me to come back another day because they packed up early! What nonsense..." (Eltham Community Hospital)</i></p>
<p>EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT</p>	<p>POSITIVE <i>"I had to use A&E couple of times. Always felt taken care of and waiting time wasn't too bad." (Queen Elizabeth Hospital)</i></p> <p>NEGATIVE: <i>"Late Sunday evening, I was referred to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital by NHS 111. When I got there, the first thing I saw was a sign with 5 hours waiting time" (Queen Elizabeth Hospital)</i></p>



OTHER SERVICES

NRS MEDICAL EQUIPMENT	<i>"No one from NRS showed up to install the toilet and shower grab bars, and Greenwich Council had to step in and do it. It should have been done weeks ago. My mother could not have a shower the whole time and she had to have strip washes."</i>
GUYS AND ST THOMAS' HOSPITAL	<i>"R has disabilities, but no one offered us any help with transport. No one even told us that hospital transport was possible. I had to find the number for hospital transport and make the arrangements myself. Then they said a support worker (me) couldn't assist him at the appointment, I had to explain that he couldn't attend the appointment alone and that he had to have someone with him. I was shocked, they didn't want to help, they weren't interested, they didn't care, but I wasn't taking no for an answer"</i>



Access to Health and Social Care for Latin American Communities

The Latin American communities are largely absent from demographic datasets and studies on health inequalities. Healthwatch Southwark engaged with 67 people using a range of tools in response to feedback about low engagement levels with health and care services.

The findings showed that the majority of respondents have experienced barriers to accessing healthcare, particularly primary care services such as GPs.

[Latin American Communities Report.pdf](#)

[KCH response.pdf](#)

[GSTT Response.pdf](#)





Case Study:

“Not being able to speak English and communicate our needs has been extremely frustrating and had a big impact on our children who have special needs. We don’t have relatives or friends in the UK to guide us through the system and pursuing support for our children has been challenging. Sometimes when we request appointments, there is no translator available. We have had to use Google Translate when seeing the doctors, but this isn’t reliable. We have been sent home with advice that we are not happy with, resulting in my child having to go to A&E. I missed a dentist appointment because I misunderstood the date (due to the language barrier), and I received a letter explaining that they will discharge my children if it happens again. I was very worried as I couldn’t explain because they didn’t have a translator. Not understanding where to seek help and being isolated has caused my wife to have depression and anxiety. We met some people in church who helped us translate at the GP.”



What People Said

The majority of respondents have experienced barriers to accessing healthcare, particularly primary care services.

The foremost challenge identified by respondents is language barriers, referring to difficulties accessing interpreters, and information and paperwork in Spanish. A lack of information around migrants' entitlements to health and social care in the UK, as well as services' overreliance on online and telephone communications, further prevents this group from accessing health and social care.

The second key finding is that many Latin Americans have experienced hostile behaviour from service providers, particularly in GP surgeries. Respondents described feeling discriminated against because they are Latin American, especially if they are not proficient in English. This aligns with Trust for London's (2016) finding that 70% of Latin Americans in London perceive discrimination to be a major barrier to improving their quality of life. Respondents also explained that the needs of individual communities are not met because diversity across the Latin American community, including dialects and countries of origin, is not captured by diversity monitoring. As a result, many respondents expressed feelings of alienation and distrust towards healthcare providers.

Finally, there was feedback that service users are struggling to navigate GP booking systems, referral processes and charges for health documents. These issues are exacerbated by additional challenges faced by Latin American communities including low-paid work and lack of access or ability to use digital technology, which negatively impacts their ability to access health and social care.

Based on these findings, Healthwatch Southwark developed a set of recommendations with respondents to address the key issues flagged. These include the provision of translated informational materials, increasing the availability of interpreters and Spanish-speaking staff, and providing diversity and inclusion training for service providers.

The findings also indicate that liaising with Latin American community organisations would be an effective strategy for health and social care providers to improve accessibility for Latin American communities in Southwark.

The full list of recommendations and responses from providers can be read in the following links:

[Latin American Communities Report.pdf](#)

[KCH_response.pdf](#)

[GSTT Response.pdf](#)





Contact us to get the information you need.

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

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