

Championing what matters to you



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Message from our chair



The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened health inequalities and increased the pressure on services; service providers have had to find new ways to deliver care and advice. Healthwatch Lewisham also had to adapt how we listened to local people's views and supported people to make complaints. Despite the challenges, we have gathered the views of local people in our regular performance reports and in special studies - notably on Covid locally, on access to GP services and on digital exclusion.

Whilst our reports include many favourable comments about services, they show that people have significant concerns about difficulties in contacting and accessing primary care services when they are needed. There is also anxiety about the impact of Covid on different parts of our local communities, and about the Covid vaccine. And people without easy access to the internet (made worse when public internet facilities were not available during lockdown), and people who are not comfortable using modern technology, have found it more difficult to access care. We seek to engage positively with the Council and the local NHS, and we look forward to working with them in the coming year to address these challenges.

In the latter part of the year, we have been able to resume much of our 'normal' activities, including our programme of Enter and View visits.

We are grateful for the commitment and resilience of our small staff team and our volunteers in continuing to support Healthwatch. We hope that this report will encourage more local people to volunteer - we have a range of roles to offer - so that we can continue our vital work of representing the views of our diverse local population.

Michael Kerin, Healthwatch Lewisham Chair



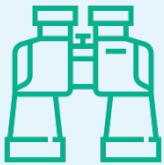
"The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities."

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Lewisham is your local health and social care champion. From Evelyn to Downham and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

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



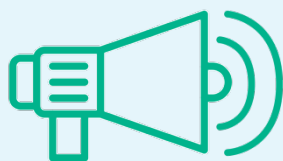
Our values

- 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 year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



4,025 people

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

166 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

112,888 impressions

Made on our social media platforms and our website, indicating that many people in our community have interacted with us.

Making a difference to care



We published

10 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. The most popular report was our

Digital Exclusion report

which highlighted the barriers that digitally excluded people face in accessing health services..

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have an average of **28** outstanding volunteers each month, who gave up **883** hours to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£140,000

During this past year, we attended

92 meetings throughout the year, which helped us to build

relationships and grow our knowledge base.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Covid | Young People



Our Youth Board engaged with 44 young people to understand their emotional wellbeing needs and how they would prefer to access support. Presented findings at SEL Quality and Safety Subcommittee.



453 people shared with us their experience of COVID-19 vaccination Programme. We provided the timely insight with local vaccination team to help maintain a good quality service.

Access | BAME



221 residents shared their experiences of using their GP. We shared the summary of findings with local partners including Lewisham Primary Care Commissioning team to understand its impact.



Patient experience data captured during 2020-21 was analysed to understand the experiences of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities when using local hospital services.

Digital | Priorities



We spoke to 45 people at risk of being digitally excluded to find out their experience of "virtual by default" access to services implemented as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.



We engaged with residents to understand what issues matter to them currently and what our focus should be over next 18 months.

E&V | Engagement



We carried out five Enter and View visits to care homes. The Care homes that we shared our findings with found our reports insightful and created action plans based on our recommendations.



We delivered 8 Feedback Forums which saw us engage with 40 residents. The Forums are a platform for residents to discuss health and social care issues, leave feedback on specific services and seek signposting support.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made 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



GP Access project

Thanks to people sharing their experience of GP access with us over the last year, we've shared our findings and feedback with Primary Care Commissioners in Lewisham to help address the key issues.

South East London Healthwatch carried out a joint research project to understand the experiences of residents accessing GP services since the lifting of the lockdown in July 2021. Our organisation worked closely with the Lewisham Primary Care Commissioning Team to create additional questions which are of interest to the local system.



80% of people

we heard from found it to "not very easy" or "not easy at all" to get through to someone over the phone at their GP practice.

The key findings of the project were as follows:

- Only 42% of respondents thought they could currently access a face-to-face appointment.
- 56% of respondents found it to be either "not very easy" or "not at all easy" to use their GP's website to look for information to access services.
- 80% described it as "not at all easy" (52%) or "not very easy" (27%) to get through to someone at their GP practice on their phone.
- The majority of respondents (61%) described the process of making an appointment as "fairly poor" or "very poor".
- Respondents who had positive experiences of the triage process explained that they found phone consultations to be more convenient as they no longer had to commute to the service.
- Most respondents felt their last appointment had met their needs and thought the health professional had listened to them and clearly explained about their treatment/and or care.

What difference did this make

- A summary report was presented to the GP access task and finish group which has been set up by the Lewisham Primary Care Operational Group to address the key issues.
- The report will be presented at the Integrated Governance and Performance Committee at the SEL CCG.

Digital Exclusion Project

We undertook a research project to understand the impact of a “virtual by default” access model (with a focus on primary care) implemented by health and social care services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the project, we interviewed 45 digitally excluded residents about their experiences of accessing services. Our research was in partnership with North Lewisham Primary Care Network who enabled us to gather the experiences of clinicians.

Key findings:

- Online appointments created barriers for participants that didn't feel confident in using devices to access online systems.
- Some participants experienced significant barriers in accessing care due to the cost of phone bills or digital technology.
- 40% of participants said that long waits on the telephone were the biggest barrier to accessing care.
- 44% felt the shift to phone, video or e-consultations had made accessing GP services harder.
- 58% would choose face-to face appointments if given the choice.
- Several people felt the new appointment systems had made it more difficult to see the same doctor or nurse.
- Not being able to speak to a GP in person had caused significant anxiety for participants who didn't trust the quality of remote appointments.



“I don't have access to online. There must be many in the same position as me.”

Lewisham resident

What difference did this make

Our project has been cited as an example of good practice as part of the recent community and citizen engagement review commissioned by Lewisham Health & Care partners .

North Lewisham Primary Care Network have developed a Digital Hub to provide guidance and advice to support residents engage with the digital access systems implemented by GP practices. They confirmed that their plans had been directly influenced by the Digital Exclusion report.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Our Patient Experience Programme

At the heart of our work is the commitment to a comprehensive Patient Experience data collection programme. We use a variety of methods to understand people's needs and experience. Engagement through outreach activities is key to what we do and how we make sure voices are heard.

In 2021-22, we heard the views of **4,025** residents through our Patient Experience Programme's hybrid approach of face-to-face and remote engagement. This represents an increase of **36%** compared to the previous year. We continue to work closely with partners to expand the delivery of our face-to-face engagement.



Signposting

We continued to offer our signposting service to support residents get the information they needed during the pandemic.

We gave support and successfully signposted **166** members of the community. Our major area of support was for GP's, as well as Hospital and Mental Health related requests. We helped with issues such as; accessing medical records, Covid-19 Vaccination information, Dementia training/ support, and access to mental health services.



Working to improve a local Care Home

We carried out an Enter and View (E&V) visit at Penerley Lodge Care Home in October 2021. As a result, the service have developed an action plan in response to eleven of our recommendations. These include:

- Creation of clearer signage inside and outside the care home
- Better utilisation of the garden with the support of residents
- Investment in tv packages and refresh of CDs and reading materials
- Installation of dementia-friendly clocks
- Display of fire emergency procedure throughout the care home

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need

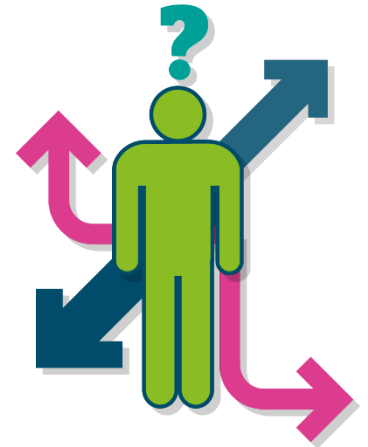


Signposting people who needed additional support

We continued to offer our signposting service to support residents get the information they needed during the pandemic. Through this service we supported **166** residents.

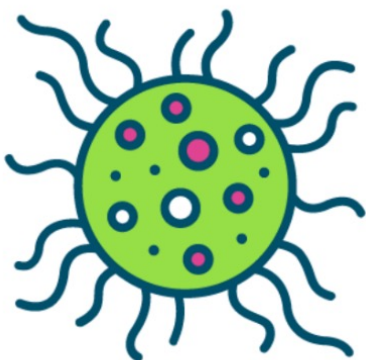
Examples of information requests

- Accessing medical records
- COVID-19 walk in appointment procedures
- Dementia training support for care home staff
- Compensation for medical negligence
- Mental health support for CYP
- COVID-19 vaccinations for housebound patients
- Urgent dental care request
- Housing issues
- Access to community mental health services



Helping the Community with Covid-19

Our website (www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk) had a total of **18,759** views in 2021 – 22.. It has a dedicated COVID-19 resource which is regularly updated to provide information about the vaccine, testing and other key messages.



Articles published about Covid-19 include

- Information on coronavirus (Covid-19)
- Lewisham health services during coronavirus (Covid-19)
- Vaccinations for coronavirus
- Additional Covid-19 guidance

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Supported our Enter and View programme by participating in visits to Care Homes.
- Provided representation at a number of meetings sharing people's experiences, encouraging people's participation and engagement.
- Created digital content on our website and social media.
- Carried out website reviews for local GP services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.





Monika

“I like to interact with people, and I feel that by volunteering at Healthwatch I gained experience such as improving communication skills while doing interviews with the patients, and I gained a deeper understanding of the health services in London. I feel that the patients appreciate being listened to about their good and bad experiences. I believe that Healthwatch has a great mission working towards an improvement in the health care system and eventually making the patients more satisfied.”

Caitlyn

“The team at Healthwatch Lewisham has been incredibly supportive of my involvement in as many different project areas as possible. They’ve enabled me to develop personally and professionally in a wide range of areas, which is invaluable as I begin my career. I’ve taken on projects that allowed me to learn new skills and develop existing ones, represented Healthwatch Lewisham both digitally and face-to-face, gotten to know an entirely new healthcare system and community, and, most importantly, had the privilege to work with a group of incredibly kind, dedicated people advocating for the people of Lewisham’s health and wellbeing.”



Julia

“Volunteering in marketing and communication turned out to be a great experience that led to a paid job as a Project Officer. I really enjoyed supporting the team with their patient engagement programme. I learned a lot about the challenges that my community faces everyday and the resources that are available to them. I am proud to be part of an organisation whose mission is to inform and empower local people. I feel enriched both on a professional and personal level.”



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



healthwatchlewisham.co.uk/volunteer



07944 391223



vip@yvhsc.org.uk

Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£140,000	Staff costs	£105,000
Additional funding	£7,000	Operational costs	£28,000
		Support and administration	£12,000
Total income	£147,000	Total expenditure	£145,000

Additional information	
Surplus	£2,000

Top priorities for 2022–23

- Launch of new Healthwatch Lewisham website in April 2022.
- Build on our outreach work to engage with residents from seldom heard communities.
- Improve our Patient Experience Programme to include a diverse range of partners and enable more residents to share their feedback.
- Improve our reporting to better share the feedback we capture and encourage outcomes.
- Continue our work with partners to encourage improvement of local services based on feedback of those who use local services.

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.

Lewisham Independent Health Complaints Advocacy

Lewisham Independent Health Complaints Advocacy service is available to offer support for residents who would like to make a complaint about an NHS service or provider.

Our team can help people with:

- Finding out what your first steps should be
- Guiding you through the complaints system
- Support through the different stages of the process.
- Offering free advice and sharing complaint templates



Ways we provide support in making NHS complaints

Direct support

Our team of Advocates provide direct support to people that need help in making their complaint. This can be done by:

- providing guidance and information
- helping navigate the complaints system
- finding out what are best steps to resolve a concern
- helping draft a complaint letter and responses
- attending local resolution meetings with service providers



In 2021-22 our advocates supported

157 complaint cases

Accessibility

Our advocates provide support to people by meeting them face to face and via telephone, letter and email as appropriate.

We provide translation services for those who need it and offer freepost to help our clients not incur postage costs.

Online support

A dedicated complaints resources page can be found on our website, which explains the NHS Complaints process and how residents can be supported by us. We have created complaints letter templates and guidance to help empower residents in making a complaint.



Information pages on our website offering advocacy guidance and support were

accessed 932 times

Themes identified by the NHS Advocacy service

Themes	
Adult Mental Health Services	Every financial quarter (three months), we receive a minimum of one complaint about access to adult autism services. There are significant barriers to access with waiting lists of approximately 2 years. Several clients had referrals which were lost within the system which meant they had to restart the process at the back of the queue. Our clients have found this an extremely stressful and frustrating process.
Complaint response waiting times	Responses to complaints continue to be significantly longer since the outbreak of the pandemic.
Accessing medical records	When analysing cases that have been signposted, we noticed a trend in people wanting support to access or resolve issues with their medical records.
Concerns about GP practices	We have seen a rise in new enquiries supporting complaints against GP practices. Many complaints are centred around miscommunication or difficulties contacting services. Residents are still experiencing challenges booking appointments through the telephone.
General advocacy	Many of our vulnerable clients have multiple health and care concerns which requires advocacy support that does not fall under the remit of the Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service. There is a need for a general support service which provides hands on support to help people to navigate services. For example, providing a service which supports people with understanding medical letters or accompanying them to appointments.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Lewisham, Waldram Place, Forest Hill, London, SE23 2LB

Contract holding organisation

Your Voice in Health and Social Care (YVHSC), 45 St Mary's Road, London, E5 5RG

Healthwatch Lewisham uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.



The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch Local Advisory Committee consisted of six people during 2021-22 who worked on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities.

The committee ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the committee met three times and approved the workplan which consisted of matters such as Enter & View visits and research study topics. The committee also helped with the development of a committee recruitment strategy and the review of quality framework.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We attend a wide number of meetings and forums, listening to local community concerns and feeding these into committee discussions. Our patient experience work sees us talking to **hundreds** of people each quarter. Their experiences help guide our research and our action - by identifying peoples' concerns we are able identify the areas that would benefit the most from evidence-based recommendations and sustained support.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media and in person where safe to do so.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. For example, through our Digital Exclusion study this year we directly engaged with older people, those with English as a second language, and those with disabilities, carrying out detailed interviews to gain a full picture of the issues they face.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk and present it at an array of public and community meetings.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We conducted 5 Enter and Views activities during 2021-22. We focused our attention towards care homes. Reports were produced that identified areas of improvements and provided recommendations for how to achieve those goals. On each occasion the provider responded to our report and recommendations.

Our GP Access report and our Digital Exclusion report both also identified a number of areas for improvements. The recommendations made are being followed up with providers for a full response.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee; so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Lewisham is represented on the Lewisham Health and Wellbeing Board by Michael Kerin, our Chair. During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by presenting Healthwatch reports and feeding into partner discussions and decision making by bringing the patient/carer/service user perspective to the forefront and utilising community intelligence and evidence to do so.

Representation

We attended **92** key strategic and operational meetings where we represented the voices of Lewisham residents, encouraged public involvement and shared our intelligence

Examples of meetings we represented patient voice at in 2021-22:

- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Healthier Communities Select Committee
- Borough Based Board
- Lewisham Safeguarding Adults Board
- Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust Patient Experience Committee
- LHCP Community & Citizen Engagement
- Lewisham Health Inequalities and Health Equity working group
- Lewisham Primary Care Operational Group
- LHCP Digital Strategic Group
- Lewisham Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment Steering Group
- LGT Accessible Information Standard Steering Group
- LGT NHS Trust Inequalities Steering Group

Impact of our representation

One of our statutory responsibilities is to promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services. One way we fulfil this function is by attending a variety of local meetings and committees where decisions are made. Below statements show feedback on our representation from some of the partners we work with.



“The NHS South East London CCG borough primary care team in Lewisham really value the close working relationship we continue to have with Lewisham Healthwatch. We really benefit from the direct patient feedback Lewisham Healthwatch are able to provide us and the open, two way dialogue we have supports us to align our work were possible to maximise impact.”

Ashley O’Shaughnessy, Associate Director of Primary Care (Lewisham), NHS South East London CCG



‘The Trust remains enormously grateful to Healthwatch for the work they do to support our patients by ensuring that key areas of patient concern are brought to our attention and remedied. Healthwatch are a valuable contributor to formal committee meetings as well as broader discussions at both Board and service level as we continue to develop the way in which we engage with, and listen to, the communities we serve. In many respects they are the eyes and ears of our community and we really value their contribution, insights and challenge.’

Val Davison, Chair, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust

Working at a regional level with local HW

Local Healthwatch continue to be represented at a regional level through the South East London (SEL) Healthwatch Director who attends meetings including the SEL CCG Governing Body, Primary Care Commissioning Committee and Equalities group.

We work closely with other local Healthwatch including Healthwatch Bexley, Healthwatch Bromley, Healthwatch Greenwich, Healthwatch Lambeth and Healthwatch Southwark. This enables us to influence how health services respond to people's experiences and views and encourage public involvement by working with the NHS SEL Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Integrated Care System (ICS) and other stakeholders.

Our influence and impact this year include:

- Healthwatch input into SEL Digital Patient engagement plan
- SEL Healthwatch were commissioned by South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) as part of the South London Listens Programme to conduct a south east London wide voluntary and community sector audit to support signposting and early intervention.
- SEL Healthwatch involvement and collaboration in developing the ICS Working with People and Communities strategy
- SEL Healthwatch engagement in the development of the SEL ICS constitution
- The Director SEL Healthwatch role as a model for VCSE participation in the ICS in SEL
- Findings from Healthwatch Bexley, Healthwatch Greenwich and Healthwatch Lewisham were included at ICS Digital Exclusion Workshop

As NHS SEL CCG ends, we look forward to being active partners in the new, legally constituted SEL Integrated Care System (ICS). We will continue to work with the Director SEL Healthwatch to provide consistent and harmonised insight and intelligence to the ICS. Healthwatch in SEL will play our part to end health inequalities by amplifying the voices of communities that go unheard and work with the ICS to reduce the barriers to services people and communities face.

Healthwatch Network Awards

SEL Healthwatch were 'Highly Commended' at the national Healthwatch Network Awards for the 'Working with your integrated care system' award. We were recognised for the creation of the SEL Director role which ensured patient feedback is shared with the Integrated Care System, while allowing each Healthwatch to continue working on local priorities





healthwatch Lewisham

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