

Feedback Report

November–December 2024

About us

Healthwatch Lambeth is your local health and social care champion. If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Every month, we listen to your feedback, help you raise your concerns with service providers and provide information of local health and care services. You can contact us by phone, email or post to share your experiences or ask for support. You can also speak to us at our many outreach events held in the borough.

This report brings together all the feedback we heard in November and December 2024. Feedback was shared with us over the phone, by email, through our website and at in-person outreach events. All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.



Table of Contents

About us	2
Table of Contents	3
What Lambeth people are saying.....	4
Top issues.....	4
Best practice	4
Feedback.....	5
Booking appointments	5
Being listened to.....	5
Diagnosis.....	6
Caring, kindness, respect and dignity.....	6
Continuity of care.....	7
Follow-on treatment.....	7
Communication with patients	8
Discharge	8
Vaccinations.....	8
Dispensing.....	9
Waiting for home adaptations.....	10
Nora’s story: Making her voice heard	11
Renee’s story: “At last saw a clinician!”	13
Grace’s story: “Fibroids are not a priority for the NHS”	14
Sanaa’s story: “I’m battling on for everyone in Mum’s situation”	15
Signposting.....	17
Next steps.....	18
Contact us	18

What Lambeth people are saying

In November and December, we spoke to 230 people about their experiences of health and care services in Lambeth.

Top issues

GPs and hospitals were the services we heard the most about during these months, followed by Adult Social Care. We also heard about NHS 111, vaccination services, services for people with drug and alcohol addictions, and pharmacies.

The most common issues raised for services were:



GP Services: Access to appointments, waiting for care, and continuity of care



Hospitals: Communication, user choice, and being listened to



Adult Social Care: Waiting for home adaptations

Best practice

"I get support from carers at home, and everything with Lambeth Adult Social Care has been good so far.

I also attend appointments at King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas's Hospital. **They treat me great, and they try their best to do what they can for me."**

Adult Social Care, King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital

Feedback



Booking appointments

People spoke about the difficulties of booking GP appointments, including complicated telephone booking processes and long wait times. [See: Renee's Story (page 13)]

"It's too long to get an appointment, and it's gotten worse since COVID. Accessing care is a maze."

GP Surgery

"I am concerned about the persistent lack of appointment availability. We are instructed to call at 8:00 am to book an appointment that same day only, which I have done, but many times I still haven't been successful in securing one. Once, I called 111 because I was concerned about a health issue, and they recommended I visit urgent care. Although everything turned out to be fine, I spent three hours waiting at urgent care simply because I couldn't secure a GP appointment and didn't know when I would be able to."

GP Surgery



Being listened to

Some individuals felt that service providers did not listen to them, resulting in inaccurate information being documented in their medical records. [See: Nora's Story (page 11)]

"Terrible experience - I spoke to a call handler on their mental health line. The call handler made me feel worse and then subsequently wrote incorrect and untrue notes of details of the call. The statements covered on the notes were not even discussed by me in the call and were completely made up by this male call handler. I am now having to raise a complaint to get these notes off my NHS medical record."

Mental health line – NHS 111

“My GP wrote the wrong information on my medical record. I want it changed, otherwise they treat you for what you don’t have. Sometimes GPs only give you medication, they don’t listen.”

GP Surgery



Diagnosis

People told us that they felt that doctors rely on a patient’s self-diagnosis to decide on treatment, instead of diagnosing themselves.

“I feel like doctors rely on patients self-diagnosing when deciding on treatment. You’re expected to already know what’s wrong with you, so they know what to prescribe, rather than them diagnosing you.”

GP Surgery



Caring, kindness, respect and dignity

Some people spoke about feeling judged and unsupported due to a perceived lack of warmth and personalised care from healthcare professionals.

“Often, it feels like doctors look at you as a number, not a person.”

GP surgery

“I sometimes feel like doctors are judging me and making assumptions based on my clothes and appearance. I feel nervous and feel the need to put on make-up before my appointments, so they take me seriously.”

GP surgery

“Whilst in the ward, my mother was frightened of the nurses because of their attitude – lack of compassion, warmth and caring approach towards her and other patients. She felt as if she and other patients were a nuisance to these nurses. She could not wait to leave and has said she never wants to go onto this ward again.”

Hospital



Continuity of care

People spoke about the importance of having a doctor who knows you and your medical history.

“It’s difficult to get the same doctor. Each time you go to the GP, you are seen by someone new that doesn’t know you or your medical history well.”

GP Surgery

“I used to have excellent GPs, but they have all retired or left. The new GPs don’t stay for long. Once, I was prescribed medication I did not want, as it was too strong. The GP suggested another one as an alternative, but if she had looked at my record, she would have seen that I had already been on that drug before and it had not helped!”

GP surgery



Follow-on treatment

We were told about inadequate follow-on care for physiotherapy and addiction recovery, highlighting the need for one-to-one support.

“My physiotherapy started three years too late, thanks to delays caused by COVID. Physiotherapy is only helpful one-to-one, as group sessions do not go enough in depth. I’m aching so much, but it’s two minutes, and then they move you to the next station.”

Physiotherapy

“It took a long time to get access to support from my GP for my alcohol addiction but once I finally accessed services to help with stopping, they were great. However, after stopping there was no real support. I got referred to a support group that had so many members that by the time we’d all introduced ourselves the meeting was over. This continued for four weeks before I gave up. I am now drinking again.”

Services for people with alcohol addiction – GP Surgery



Communication with patients

The need for better communication and clear guidance prior to a surgical procedure was highlighted. [See: Grace's Story (page 14)]

"The prep phone call was one day too late, and the procedure nearly had to be postponed on the day because it was unclear if the clopidogrel had been stopped for the 'policy' length of time. Absolutely the fault of the clinic procedure but patient was blamed. This could have wasted a whole slot (like a Did Not Attend). Also why didn't they say to stop drinking to stop the bowel reacting so we could actually travel to the hospital? Utterly thoughtless."

Gastroenterology: digestive, intestinal, and bowel services – Hospital



Discharge

We were told about delays and poor organisation during the hospital discharge process, particularly around dispensing and follow-on care.

"The discharge was awful. They kept threatening it would happen 'now', but it actually took 2 days. The meds took more than a day to come up from the on-site pharmacy. The essential community support was not organised. My Mum lives independently and the ward sister assumed family would drop everything and do the care. Not possible as some live overseas. Hopeless."

Gastroenterology: digestive, intestinal, and bowel services – Hospital



Vaccinations

Some people struggled to access vaccinations. [See: Sanaa's Story (page 15)].

"I had to ask [to get vaccines]. They notified me weeks after the shots, and I had to ask for the shingles shot. My practice did not do it, so I had to walk miles to another practice, but the chemists nearby did the flu shot and I did get all female staff."

Vaccines – GP Surgery

Others felt concerned about the safety of vaccines.

"I'm concerned about the safety of Covid vaccines."

Public health



Dispensing

We were told about difficulties renewing a prescription due to unclear procedures and issues with the online system. We also heard about people feeling unsupported during the medication withdrawal process.

"I am becoming increasingly concerned about the service at my practice. I am on a prescription that needs to be renewed monthly. I start requesting a repeat two weeks before I run out.

The practice has an online repeat prescription request system. On this occasion it was unavailable, so I waited a couple of days and it was still unavailable. I phoned the practice, who told me that I could not request it over the phone, but the pharmacy could. They have requested it twice but are not allowed to contact me to say that it hasn't been prescribed.

I have done everything they asked, and yet after two weeks, I am about to run out of medication, which will leave me with a weekend full of unpleasant symptoms."

GP Surgery

"I was discharged from the addiction service because I wasn't on street drugs, but had simply developed an addiction to drugs the GP had prescribed in excess of NICE guidelines (but then failed to support either in maintaining, tapering, or withdrawing). I was forced to do a very dangerous and unsupported cold turkey withdrawal."

Services for people with drug, alcohol and other addictions



Waiting for home adaptations

People told us they faced long waiting times and poor communication when trying to get accessibility measures in their homes.

“I’d like accessibility measures in my home. My GP referred me ages ago, but I have not heard back from adult social care.”

Lambeth Adult Social Care

“I’ve been waiting for home adaptations for nearly two years. My details were passed on to the Council and I didn’t hear anything for a year. Then, someone from Lambeth Council came to assess my home. I asked about the delay and was told my case had “only just been picked up”. I got a letter and thought my adaptations had been approved, but nothing happened. I complained until someone reached out to the Adult Social Care team on my behalf. I was finally contacted by Adult Social Care – they told me the waiting list is very long, but I will be contacted again in March.”

Lambeth Adult Social Care

Nora's story: Making her voice heard

Being listened to

What we heard:

Nora, a Black Caribbean woman, wanted to make a complaint about her GP, based on two recent incidents.

Firstly, she noticed a printed copy of her daughter's medical summary included information that wasn't supposed to be there. When she pointed it out, she felt reception staff were rude and unwilling to fix the error.

On another occasion, she attempted to arrange a home-visit for her daughter, as she was not well. She was told that they could not conduct home visits, in a manner she found dismissive.

"I could hear the person on the phone speaking to the doctor, saying things like, "She says she's going to call Healthwatch" and that I was "ranting". [...]

I was so distressed. I'm telling you how I feel, and you tell me there's nothing you can do about it. I've never known the practice to be like this. I am an unpaid carer – I don't expect special treatment, but still."

She also expressed that she found it difficult to make a complaint, as she could not find where to do it online or on the NHS app.

What we did:

We explained the practice's complaints process and provided Nora with the link to complain. At her request, we also shared her feedback with the practice, who told us they would contact her directly to resolve her issue.

When we followed up a month later, Nora told us she had not been contacted by the practice. We wrote to the practice manager again, who apologised for the delay and confirmed they had now contacted Nora.

Nora told us:

"I had a phone call from the Practice Manager. I expressed my concern regarding the Practice complaints and compliments process on the website.

I felt listened to and supported through my complaint. I am hopeful that things will improve in the future as staff members take customer service seriously. Thank you for reaching out again!"

Renee's story: "At last saw a clinician!"

Booking appointments

Renee, an 80+ year old White woman, shared her mixed experience of getting an urgent GP appointment.

"[On Tuesday morning], I tried to book an urgent appointment – bronchitis following a cold. I phoned from before 8.00 am when the practice opened.

When I eventually got through to multiple choice and dialled 1 for appointments, I got cut off. This happened several times."

Renee then tried numerous other avenues to get an appointment, including by email, app, and even by calling NHS 111.

"The recorded message mentioned an email address. I tried to find this on the website, but it was not on the website. I then tried the Evergreen app but gave up over registration requiring a photo ID. I phoned the 111 service and eventually got on to an adviser who took me through endless questions mostly related to heart attack symptoms. **After nearly half an hour on the phone, he said he'd get a doctor to call me back. I'm waiting!"**

On the Friday, Renee decided to visit the GP to book an appointment in person.

"I visited the GP practice at 11 a.m. I spoke to a receptionist, who took full details and promised me a phone call giving me a same-day in-person appointment. **At 2 p.m., I got a phone call giving me an appointment on Monday. Note: I did not get a reminder text."**

Finally, on Monday, Renee was able to have an appointment.

"At last saw a clinician! Actually, a Physician Associate. Very helpful. Listened to my chest, checked blood oxygen levels, etc. Prescribed a different antibiotic and told me to get back to the practice if this doesn't help."

Grace's story: "Fibroids are not a priority for the NHS"

Consent and choice in fibroid care

Grace, a Black African woman under 49, told us about her negative experience of fibroid care in hospital.

"I have been on the waiting list for my fibroids to be removed. My first surgery was cancelled by me because I was not convinced on the options provided. The second date offered was also cancelled, but by the hospital as they put me on the wrong list."

She declined to have surgery in one hospital, resulting in a much longer wait for care, but she ended up being sent there anyway.

"I am due surgery in the next couple of days at a hospital I declined to have a surgery there, hence I had to wait much longer, but **they have sent me there again.**"

She also felt rushed when reading her consent form and had to **"speak up for the surgeon to allow me a few minutes to go through it"**. She requested her consent form be sent to her directly, but at the time of writing to us had not yet received it.

"Fibroids are not a priority for the NHS. They offer you the cheapest options of treatment without taking into account the patient's wellbeing. The treatment option and care management provided by the hospital was very poor. Better care and fibroids management is needed."

She also wondered if her ethnic background had affected the options provided, stating she wanted **"to know how many women are offered an open myomectomy, are sent to Princess Royal University Hospital, are offered robotic surgery, and their ethnic background."**

Sanaa's story: "I'm battling on for everyone in Mum's situation"

Getting vaccinations for housebound patients

Sanaa talked to us about the difficulties of getting the Covid vaccination for her mother, who is housebound.

"I have been trying to organise the Covid vaccine for my mother, who is housebound. **It's been appalling. I lost count of the number of phone calls I had to make.**"

After her GP told her they could not do the vaccination at home, Sanaa was passed around between services, with each telling her to call someone else.

"Everyone I called would give me a different number to call instead each time. I was given a number for Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital; then they gave me the number of a chemist who did home visits. The chemist then told me they don't do home visits anymore.

Then I rang NHS England. I tried three different numbers: one of them was all answering machines, another I got through to, but it was not related to public health at all – they answered but told me they couldn't cover that concern. Finally, I reached a number that told me the GP was responsible for organising vaccinations. This was very frustrating because I started off by asking the GP!

Everybody just tells you to ring someone else; to get someone else to deal with it. No one knows what the right procedure is. I also rang over ten numbers and only two of them got back to me – including you [Healthwatch Lambeth]. They don't even bother getting back to you even if you leave a voicemail."

Sanaa was struck by how difficult it was to get the information she needed, and worried about other vulnerable people who did not have someone to stick up for them.

“These are the most vulnerable people! Mum has got me in her corner, but I’m battling on for everyone in Mum’s situation. There is not enough information available for elders, and unless there’s money to do it, services are going to keep passing the buck! Organisations are bullying us and sending us texts telling us to get vaccinations, but it’s not accessible for everyone.”

Signposting

In November and December, you asked us:

	How can I get a blue badge?	You can apply for a blue badge online at www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge .
	Can my newborn baby get the Hepatitis B vaccine at home?	You can ask your hospital through their Patient Advice and Liaison Service .
	How can I get in touch with a Social Prescriber?	You can ask your GP surgery to refer you to a social prescriber.
	Where can I get advice on housing issues?	Citizens Advice has self-help guides on many housing issues. You can also get housing advice and support from organisations like Centre 70 .
	I am struggling financially. Where can I find emergency food and support?	Lambeth Larder has a directory of food banks and other useful services for people in financial need.

Next steps

We follow up on all concerns and issues raised.

We share all compliments, complaints and concerns with the relevant service providers and commissioners. We ask that service providers acknowledge the feedback and make note of any actions they can take to address it.

We share feedback either anonymously or, with consent, with contact details, so that service providers can address service users' concerns directly.

We answer any queries by providing the requested information, or by signposting to any relevant organisations that may be able to help.

Contact us

You can share your experience or feedback with us by:

- **Online form:** www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/share-your-views
- **Email:** info@healthwatchlambeth.org.uk
- **Telephone:** 020 7274 8522

For more information on this report, or to request it in large print, contact eulalia.gonzalez@healthwatchlambeth.org.uk.



healthwatch Lambeth

Healthwatch Lambeth
Tripod, LB of Lambeth, PO Box 80771
London, SW2 9QQ

healthwatchlambeth.org.uk
t: 020 7274 8522

[instagram.com/HWLambeth](https://www.instagram.com/HWLambeth)
[x.com/HWLambeth](https://twitter.com/HWLambeth)
[facebook.com/HWLambeth](https://www.facebook.com/HWLambeth)