

April 2024

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.



Participants at Mental Well-Being Workshop organised by Healthwatch Greenwich and Royal Borough of Greenwich Public Health.

What did we hear this month?

We heard from 459 Greenwich residents about their experience of health and care services.

“The reception staff are rude they need training on empathy and how to treat patients.

GP Practice Patient

“I am happy with the service I received from my GP. I was given a referral for my skin to the dermatologist. The waiting list was quite long though.

GP Practice Patient

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Community Engagement and Outreach



Healthwatch Greenwich celebrated International Women’s Day by raising awareness about women’s health screening. At the event organised by Royal Borough of Greenwich in General Gordon Square, our team interacted with women from various communities and heard their experiences of screening such as breast and cervical screening.

Using freebies of toiletries and sanitary products to attract women to our stall, our staff and volunteers took the opportunity to strike up informal conversations. During these informal conversations, our team explained the importance of going for screening; encouraged them to attend screening; reassured those who were nervous and provided our contact details if they face any issues or want to share their experiences afterwards.

During our nearly five-hours stay at the square, we managed informal conversations with 34 women, and gave leaflets to more than 60. Most of the women we spoke to (25) were from Black or ethnic minority backgrounds. More than half were aged between 19 – 34, providing us with crucial insights on women’s perspectives and experience of breast and cervical screening.

We found that recently migrated women, (such as those with refugee status), lacked awareness about the importance of breast and cervical screenings. These women were even surprised to know that they would be offered routine screening appointments without having to pay any fees or charges.

"...never had one in my life [in my country]," said a woman. "I didn't know I could get tested, I moved to the UK recently and I didn't know I could get a test about that."

However, some were worried that they were not eligible for screening because of their immigration status – or that they would have to pay for it. They also told our team that they have had positive experiences with GPs and hospitals and their efficient services. Initiation like phone calls from GP as a reminder to attend for their appointment has motivated them to attend screening appointment. Some, however, expressed difficulties in accessing healthcare services for other conditions, or poor communication, have eroded their trust and deterred them from booking or attending screening appointments. Interestingly, for some women, it was their love and care for their children that motivated them to attend their screening. For some women, it was the fear and the discomfoting experiences shared by friends or family barred them from going for routine screening. Mobility disabilities and insecurity around their body images or fear of being judged also emerged as additional barriers for women attending screening opportunities.

"...for wheelchair users, we can't have breast screening because we can't stand," shared a woman. "What other measures are in place for people like us, I can't even access gym services, they always promise things, but nothing is done..."

Community Engagement – Mental Wellbeing

Healthwatch Greenwich and Public Health held the second of a series of three workshops with community and project leaders exploring initiatives to improve mental wellbeing.

Participants shared that, within certain communities, levels of trust were low between residents and central or statutory services. When needing help, residents often turned to community and project leaders, rather than official services. Opportunities for statutory services to build on these trusted relationships included greater working with community and project leaders to share information through existing channels, more use of public spaces and regular events to raise awareness of resources to support mental wellbeing, and a sustained dialogue with the council.

Coffee morning with parents at Willow Dene



Our Engagement Manager Kiki joined the Willow Dene coffee morning and talked to parents about their experiences with health and care services in Greenwich.

Parents talked about their disappointment with long delays to access services provided by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust. One parent shared her frustration of having to wait for two years for an assessment for her child living with a range of disabilities, only to have the appointment conducted as a brief phone call. Another mother spoke about her referral for Occupational Therapy made in August 2023, and not receiving a response until March 2024. All parents shared similar frustrations giving examples of long waits and feeling let down by Oxleas.

Parents spoke about their experience at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, including, for one mother, a stressful 10-hour wait with her non-verbal autistic son in the Emergency Department. Other parents spoke about frequent cancellations of appointments at the Epilepsy clinic at Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

All parents would welcome more support during transition, such as when their child reached puberty. Parents felt this was a significant gap in support services, leaving them ill-prepared to cope with their special needs children.

Provider Response:

Response from Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

We are sorry to hear that our services failed to meet expectations and would welcome those affected to contact us so we can explore their experiences and respond on an individual basis.

Oxleas acknowledge that the waiting times for both ASD and ADHD assessments are longer than we would like. Unfortunately this is a national challenge with waiting times continuing to grow due to significant increases in requests for assessments.

We would like to reassure our children, young people and families that we are actively working to address this complex challenge and also we are reviewing and streamlining our pathways to eliminate unnecessary delays.

The Greenwich Local offer lists a range of organisations who can support children, young people and their families while they are waiting for, and after assessment/ diagnosis: The details can be found at:

[Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Local Offer | Greenwich Community Directory](#)

What Greenwich residents are saying...

Primary Care

“ At my GP Practise, the reception phone will ring forever, and no one pick it up. When you call to book an appointment, the phone will ring for nearly an hour, and it will cut off by itself because no one picks it up or it can be busy forever. Then you walk in and will not get an early appointment. They advise you to come in early in the morning and wait for them to open. But the doctors are very nice people.

GP Practice Patient

“ It is impossible to get an appointment at my GP Practise. I only managed to see the nurse...

GP Practice Patient

“ I went for a general check up after giving birth it was easy to book my appointment. The GP was very friendly.

GP Practice Patient

“ When I call to get an appointment, they hardly pick up the call and when they pick up it takes a week to see the doctor, this they could do better. I know they can be busy but it's too stressful to stay on a call for a long time, and too long to get a call back from the doctor. Surely they can find something to improve their system.

GP Practice Patient

“ I will always choose them over any GP surgery. They are fantastic and they care. They should keep up the good work

GP Practice Patient

“ I am not happy about their services. When you book an appointment and want to see a doctor, they will book you to see a nurse instead and the nurse will not be able to prescribe medication. Therefore, they will end up by booking you again to go and see doctor after a couple of days or weeks...

GP Practice Patient

“ I was not happy with their recent service and care towards my daughter. I have a teenage daughter who was unwell. I called the surgery to book an appointment to see a doctor. Instead, the receptionist told me I had to see a pharmacist which she referred me to. She sent me the address of the pharmacy to go and see them. I was thinking there might be a doctor at the chemist. To my surprise upon getting there I was told there is no doctor. No one told me there would be no doctor there. The pharmacist prescribed medication, but my daughter got worse, so I called reception again. I had to complain before she would book to see a doctor who prescribed antibiotics. Not a good experience for me or my daughter.

GP Practice Patient

“ I am not happy with my services... When you call, the receptionist will give various excuses that there is no doctor or doctors are on hold. I am very upset. I do not know when receptionists became doctors. They do not listen to me.

GP Practice Patient

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Survey

We surveyed 353 Greenwich residents using face-to-face interviews to understand their experiences at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Participants were interviewed in a range of venues including in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Greenwich libraries, community centres, and children’s centres, with each interview taking up to ten minutes. Our sample was a good reflection of Greenwich residents.

Ethnicity

Asian, Asian British	Black, Black British	Mixed ethnic groups	White(any)	Other ethnic groups	Prefer not to say
59	86	11	181	10	6
353					

Gender

Woman	Man	Prefer not to say
228	120	5
353		

Disability/long term condition (LTC)

Living with disability or LTC	Not living with disability or LTC	Prefer not to say
97	244	12
353		

Age

Under 24	25-49	50-64	65+	Prefer not to say
24	149	87	82	11
353				

Carer

Carer	Not a carer	Prefer not to say
67	277	9
353		

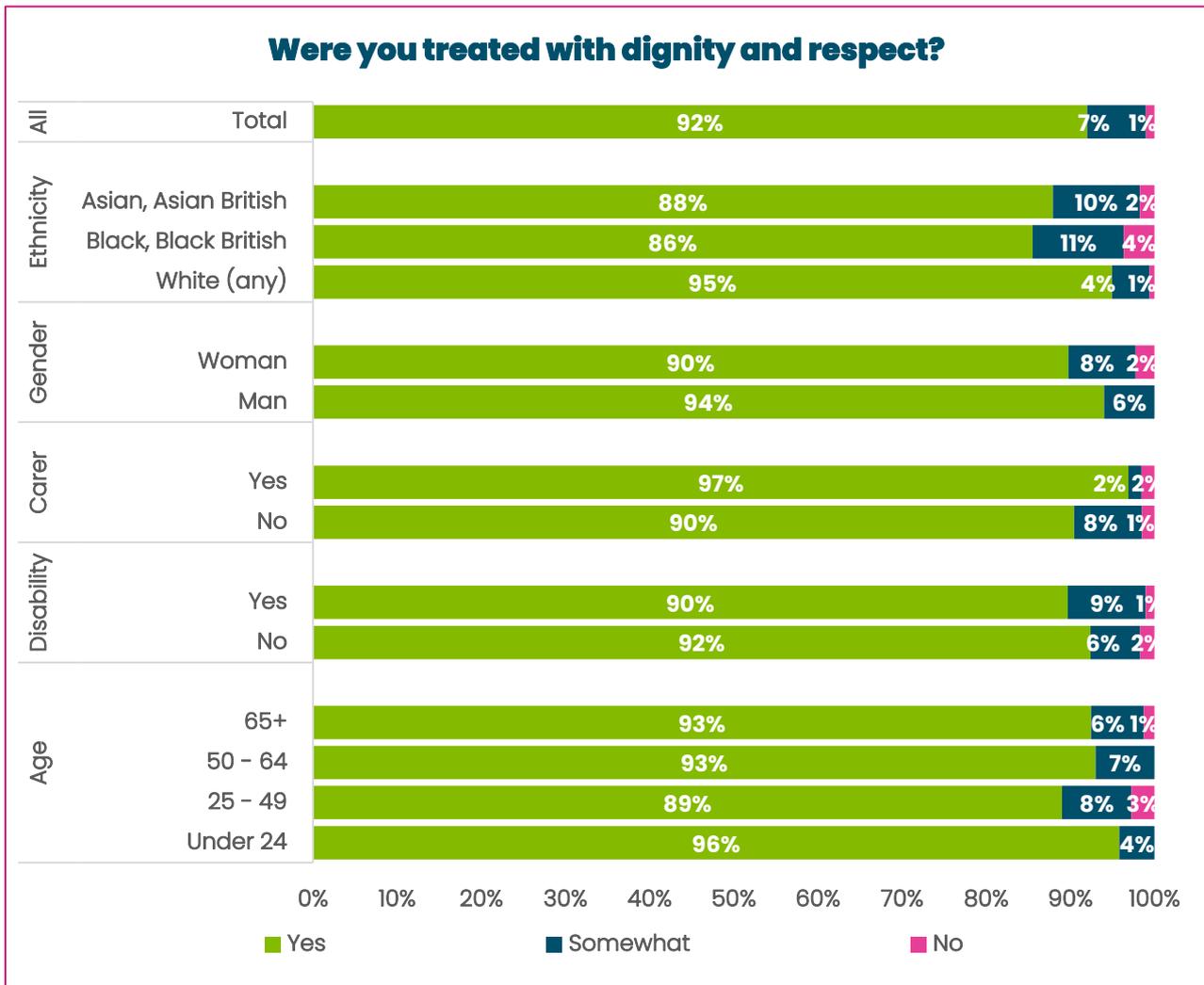
Summary of Findings

A very high proportion of people had a positive experience of Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Over 90% said they were treated with dignity/respect and understood the information provided to them, and over 80% said that they had enough time to ask questions. However, while levels of satisfaction were very high overall, positive results were slightly lower for those identifying as Black, Black British, and Asian, Asian British.

Results of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Survey

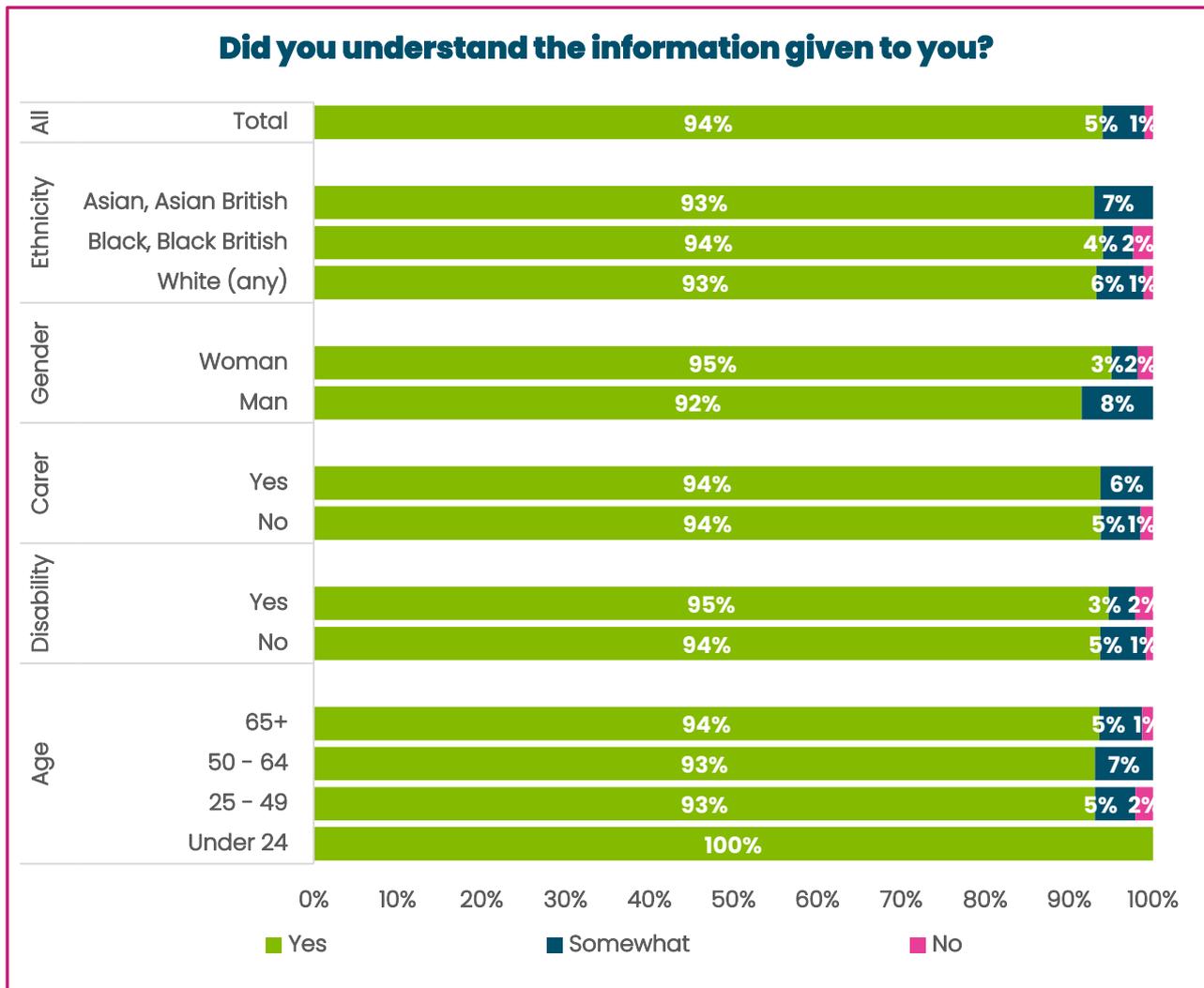
Experience at the hospital

Most people felt they had been treated with dignity and respect, with small differences between groups.



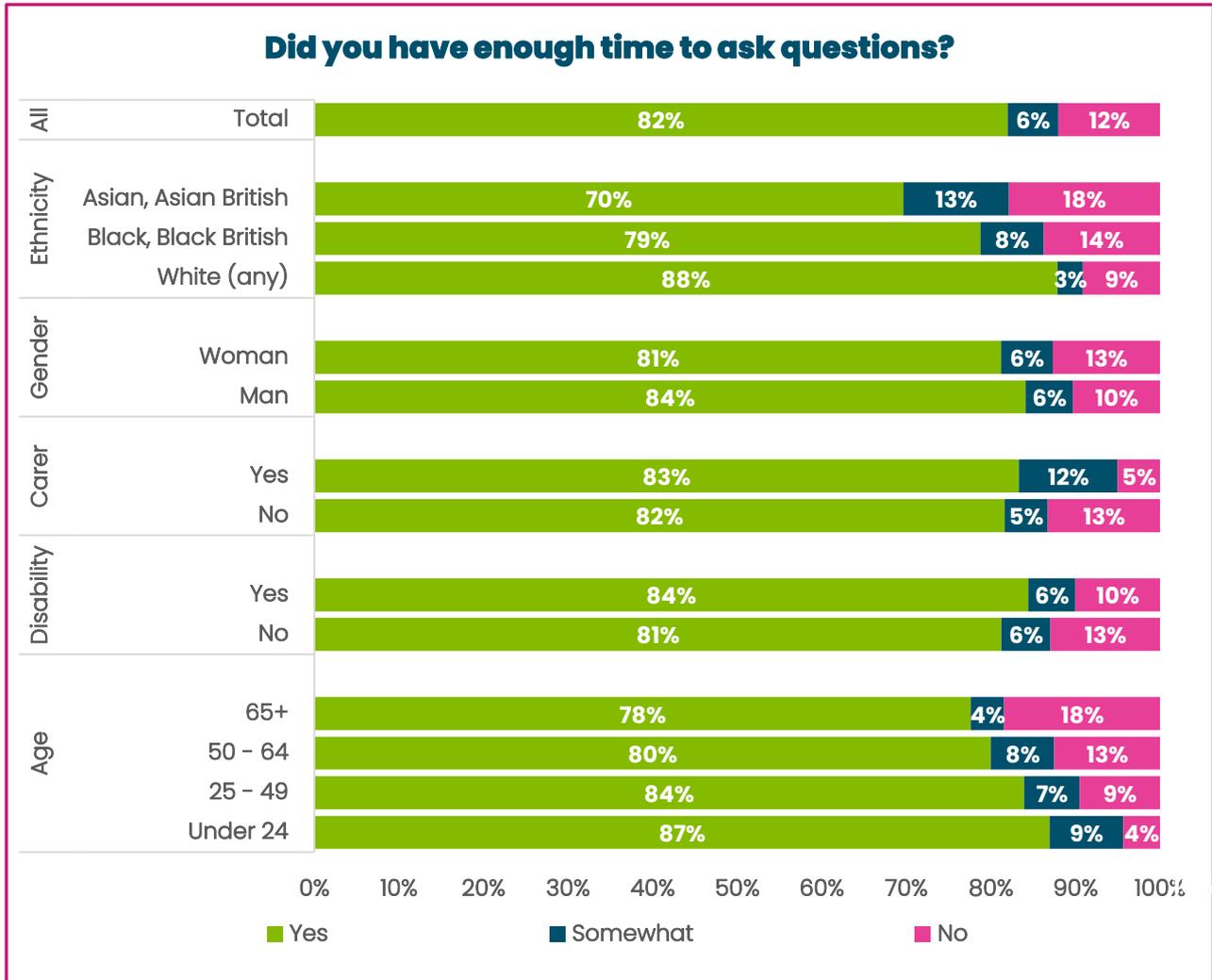
Understanding of information provided

Understanding of the information provided at Queen Elizabeth Hospital was very high (94%) and consistent across groups.



Time to ask questions

While most people said they had enough time to ask questions, the proportion who answered yes to this question was lower when compared to other questions. There was also more variation in answers between groups.



Conclusion

Most people had a very positive experience of Queen Elizabeth Hospital. They were treated with dignity and respect, understood the information provided to them, and had enough time to ask questions.

Despite this, there were small differences between groups. Although still high overall, a smaller proportion of Asian, Asian British and Black, Black British respondents answered yes to being treated with dignity and respect and to having

enough time to ask questions than White respondents. Our small-scale survey format cannot explain why these differences have been observed and further investigation is needed to better understand people's experiences and why they feel the way they do.

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:

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