

Monthly Feedback Report

June 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.



Parents and providers at the Greenwich Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership Meeting at Storkway Children's Centre

What did we hear in June?

We heard from 339 Greenwich residents about their experience of health and care services.

“ I had a good experience recently at my GP. My appointments are very attentive, and they listened to me carefully. I felt heard and was taken good care of.

GP Practice

“ I have been with my GP for many years. However, since COVID, things have changed. I feel they don't have the same patience as they used to and can sometimes sound rude, especially the receptionist. I was last seen in January. I felt rushed and I am not young anymore so talking a bit slower than usual. I think doctors should be more patient with us elderly.

GP Practice

In this report

About us	1
What did we hear in June?	1
Community Engagement and Outreach- Maternity and Neonatal Care	3
What Greenwich residents are saying... ..	8
Accessibility of Services	8
Service User Support and Communication	10
Children's Centre's	11
Aaliyah's Experience: "I was seen but I was not heard".....	12
Next Steps	13
Contact Us.....	13

Community Engagement and Outreach- Maternity and Neonatal Care



On Wednesday 1 May, Healthwatch Greenwich met with a group of parents at Plumstead Library to explore their experiences of local health and social care services.

Parents shared how they value children's centres and other parent groups for information and support, describing these as "lifesaving".

"Children's centres are lifesaving; they help us battle loneliness and isolation".

Many of these parents shared how they prefer accessing information and support through these groups rather than using a visiting health team, explaining that they felt judged by their health visitors and that their concerns were not being listened to.

"I always fear that health visitors will judge me. They seem stuck in the past, and I don't feel comfortable talking to them about my worries or questions. I prefer my mom's groups; they are my main source of advice and support. When I mentioned to my health visitor that I prefer co-sleeping with my child, she was very judgemental. It feels like they don't have time to listen; they just want to remove you from their lists.

Whenever I tried to share my worries, they accused me of being an overly stressed mother. They were dismissive. No matter what, as a new parent, everyone needs support, no matter how small the issue is”.

Parents highlighted the need for improved continuity of care, including clearer explanations on procedures, and a more respectful approach from healthcare providers.

One mother shared that while giving birth, her midwife didn't ask for her consent to get an epidural.

“When I was giving birth, I had a midwife, and then another person came into my room. I was surprised because she didn't introduce herself. I asked, ‘who are you?’ And she said, ‘I am your midwife; the other midwife ended her shift’. I understand that's their job, but they should think about the patients. The same midwife didn't ask for consent to give me an epidural. Everything happened quickly, and I felt my opinion didn't matter. I felt helpless and insignificant.”

Overall, this meeting emphasised the importance of children's centres in offering accessible support for parents. It also highlighted the need for improved communication and increased support from healthcare staff where many parents feel their choices and concerns are going unheard.

Provider Response:

Response from Bromley Healthcare

Safe sleep is discussed at all health visiting contacts in baby's first year to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), this is best practice as advised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Health visitors will explore sleep practices and have meaningful conversations about caring for baby at night and share evidence-based information and resources on the safest place for baby to sleep. The safest place for a baby to sleep, as advised by The Lullaby Trust, UNICEF and BASIS, is in their own clear, flat, separate sleep space, such as a cot or Moses basket. Investigations into SIDS have identified that many of these deaths happen in a context of an unsafe sleep environment. Where parents are co-sleeping Health Visitors will provide information and advice on how to remove risks to make your bed a safer place for baby.

All our practitioners are undertaking training under the Baby Friendly Initiative Standards and The Lullaby Trust which supports professionals to have more open and productive discussions with families about safer sleep and co-sleeping using a proportionate, parent-centred and non-judgmental approach to find practical solutions for families appropriate to their needs which support safe sleeping practices.

More information and resources can be found at: lullabytrust.org.uk
basisonline.org.uk unicef.org.uk

Unfortunately, due to anonymity of the feedback provided we are not able to look further into this case to provide an individualised response. Families can contact Bromley Healthcare to feedback their experiences through bromh.feedback@nhs.net.



This month Healthwatch Greenwich joined a meeting organised by the Greenwich Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP) held at the Storkway Children's Centre. The MNVP works to review and contribute to the development and improvement of local maternity and neonatal care. MNVP's primary objective is to gather feedback from women/birthing people and their families about their experiences with maternity and/or neonatal services.

Three women took part, all recent mothers who had given birth at either Queen Elizabeth Hospital or Lewisham Hospital. Mothers shared both their positive and negative experiences with local maternity care. Three themes came up repeatedly – feeling blamed and judged for having a caesarean section, difficulty with finding support after birth, and varying levels of attentiveness from healthcare staff.

One mother, who opted for an elective caesarean, spoke emotionally about feeling judged by her birthing team.

"There is so much stigma around caesareans. Providers need to be sensitive to our context and understand that some mothers might not have the option of a natural birth. We need to start changing the narrative to 'a safe birth is best'."

Mothers also shared concern over the attentiveness of midwives. One mother shared her experience of seeing a midwife at Queen Elizabeth Hospital after noticing reduced foetal movement. The midwife performed an internal exam without using sanitary paper on the examination table and didn't explain to her why she was doing the exam. She feared that this would induce labour but felt she couldn't voice her concerns.

"She was quite patronising. She asked me if I was a first-time mum and she shouted at me because I hadn't come earlier. She said that I'd put my baby at risk."

Accessibility of informal support post-birth can also be a challenge. Mia, a mother of a four-month-old, described how hard it was to find support groups.

"There are posters [at Queen Elizabeth Hospital], but after giving birth, you won't remember this information or even focus on it. I would prefer face-to-face support, someone to talk to who can give me this information."

Both mothers and maternity staff spoke about the importance of children's centres as vital resources for information and support, referring to them as "lifelines" for new parents.

Staff from Queen Elizabeth Hospital shared their work with social prescribers to ensure midwives are equipped with up-to-date information and to identify ways to improve engagement with women and birthing people.

Representatives from the NHS South East London Integrated Care System announced a pilot program, offering antenatal classes in Spanish, with plans to include other languages like French and Arabic, making these services more accessible.

Healthwatch Greenwich shared insight from women who had miscarried. Women reported receiving notifications for antenatal scans after their miscarriage, increasing their distress. In response, the Trust shared the implementation of an electronic record system that would update all health and care providers if a woman had a miscarriage or experienced the death of a baby. The implementation of this new system is expected to stop automatic appointments. There are also plans to introduce a private waiting room, offering a more compassionate environment.

What Greenwich residents are saying...

Accessibility of Services

- “ I am happy with the service from my GP, especially with the app to request repeated prescriptions. However, I am not happy with their phone support service as it is slow to answer.**
GP Practice
- “ The waiting times at my GP are really long and we had to wait 30 minutes for a phone consultation, but face-to-face communication is fine.**
GP Practice
- “ My GP does not take calls and they don't pick up the phone even if you call five times. When you manage to book an appointment, they are very good with sharing information with you.**
GP Practice
- “ I am satisfied with my GP. The communication is good but the waiting times to book an appointment or talk to them on the phone is not good. They need more people at the call line to answer calls.**
GP Practice
- “ It takes long to get appointments at my GP. I find that I have more phone calls instead of face-to-face appointments. Overall, the GP is not that bad.**
GP Practice
- “ My GP waiting times can be like an hour. They could get more reception staff. Their communication, however, is good.**
GP Practice

“ I had a good experience when phoning my GP. They helped me to get an appointment quickly and also gave out good advice.

GP Practice

“ There are long waiting lines at my GP. I once made an appointment in December but wasn't contacted until January.

GP Practice

“ I think it used to be great to just walk in but the last time I used the sexual health centre, I had to call and book an appointment. I wish it could go back to how it was.

Sexual Health Centre

“ The service at my GP is good. I have never had any problem booking appointments, but it can be a long queue to be seen.

GP Practice

“ It is not easy to get an appointment at my GP. I spent 45 minutes on the phone on hold. I wanted to make an appointment with a nurse for a blood test. They should make an option to book a blood test appointment on the phone.

GP Practice

“ The phone line is a long wait at my GP. However, the nurses are nice and communicate very well.

GP Practice

“ It is very hard to get an appointment at my GP. Nobody showed me how to use the app or book an online appointment. I needed a repeat prescription and I had to go there physically. I felt it was a waste of my time.

GP Practice

“ I have no negative experiences with my GP practice. They give me appointments when I need them.

GP Practice

“ My GP practice is good. The call back from the reception staff works well and it is followed by an appointment.

GP Practice

Service User Support and Communication

“ My GP is great. They are good at appointments and immunisations.

GP Practice

“ I am grateful for the care at my GP. The doctors are always very good.

GP Practice

“ I find my GP very helpful; they always give me an appointment when I need it. The only thing is sometimes they forget to let me know my results after having a blood test. I call them when that happens. Other than that, they are great.

GP Practice

“ I find the services at Queen Elizabeth Hospital very good but it would be better if they listened to us as the patients. I go there and the waiting time is horrible. When I am seen, I tell them what can be done to make me feel better but feel unheard.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

“ The process has changed at my GP. There's a queue and a waiting list. However, they communicate well.

GP Practice

“ There is poor communication at my GP. The reception says different information on the phone compared to face-to-face.

GP Practice

Children's Centre's

“ The McMillan Children's Centre is always shut. I ended up going to the Robert Owen Children's Centre even though the McMillan Children's Centre is the closest one to my house. I find the activities at the Robert Owen Children's Centre interesting for children.

McMillan Early Childhood Centre

“ I have used children's centre's for my child and found the Robert Owen Children's Centre to be fantastic. There are many parents and children that go there, and I have made good contact with them.

Robert Owen Children's Centre

“ Finding out about children's centre's that are up to date can be difficult, especially online.

Greenwich Resident

Aaliyah's Experience: "I was seen but I was not heard"

Aaliyah is an active and loving mother of four living with neck and shoulder pain from an old injury. Her daily activities often aggravate her injury. *"Because I have a three-year-old, he needs lifting, and this makes it worse,"* Aaliyah explains. Most days, she can cope with the pain, but on days it flares up, she's unable to get out of bed meaning she cannot look after her youngest son, Takai, who is on the waiting list to be assessed for autism and needs lots of energy and attention.

In acute pain, Aaliyah went to A&E at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. *"I was hesitant because of the waiting time. I was like "Okay, I'm gonna be there a very long time..."* At the hospital, Aaliyah waited, crying in pain, drawing the attention of others in the waiting room. After two hours the pain intensified, moving to her chest, making it hard to breathe. *"I just sat there crying. Even the nurse was like they really need to take you to scan because you are clearly in pain. And she said she would go tell the doctor about my pain and that the doctor should see me quickly."*

Three hours after seeing the nurse and five hours after arriving at A&E, Aaliyah was called in to see a doctor.

Aaliyah described how rushed the doctor was, which made her feel that her symptoms were not fully considered and that her concerns were not being listened to. She explained to the doctor that her pain felt different and that she couldn't move her neck. The doctor told her the pain would go away and prescribed medication, but no one explained why she wouldn't get the scan the nurse suggested or why it was not needed – leaving Aaliyah feeling ignored and overlooked, worried she'd not received optimum care. *"I think she [the doctor] should have listened to me... what I was feeling at that time wasn't just a painkiller situation; it was something deeper. I sat there all those hours just to get painkillers that I could have gotten from my GP, but they couldn't give me an earlier appointment, so I had to go to A&E."*

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 there needs to be further development.

Contact Us

For more information on our feedback report, or to request it in large print or easy read format, contact:

- Caitlin@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk
- Telephone: 07903 685 533
- Email: Info@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk
- Website: <http://www.healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk/>
- Twitter: [@HWGreenwich](https://twitter.com/HWGreenwich)
- Facebook: [healthwatchgreenwich](https://www.facebook.com/healthwatchgreenwich)

