



Patient feedback on waiting times
for elective surgery and A&E

healthwatch
Tower Hamlets

Feedback on waiting times for elective surgery and A&E

- Feedback collected through our face-to-face Patient Experience Programme and Community Insights System (CIS) which collects online feedback from Google Reviews, NHS website and social media.
- Limited feedback on waiting times for elective surgery (in total 5 reviews from the last 12 months) - all collected through the Community Insights System
- 25 reviews relating to waiting times for A&E - 10 reviews collected through face-to-face interviews and 15 on CIS
- All feedback related to the Royal London Hospital
- The feedback was collected between October 2022 and October 2023. Some were collected as part of the Healthwatch Maternity Survey.

Feedback on waiting times for elective surgery

- Most reviews regarding waiting times for Elective Surgery related to lack of communication around wait times or cancelled appointments:

Selected comments:

"I was due to have surgery on an aneurysm, however, I found out the operation was cancelled, just 4 days beforehand, without notification nor explanation. I have since found out it was cancelled due to an 'administrative error'... Unbelievable! I have called numerous different numbers to find out if it has been rescheduled but no one seems to know anything, and they keep sending me back and forth between different departments. I am incredibly stressed out by this whole situation!! And I am very disappointed in the absolute lack of communication I have had. What am I meant to do? Very, very unhappy.

"They kept sending me home with gallstones [and] didn't bother examining and checking what the pain is until my stone got really big they had to remove all my gallbladder and lost so much weight delayed surgery as well kept me nil by mouth for 3 days without giving me a reason."

Feedback on Waiting Times at A&E

- Lack of communication was also one of the main themes in the feedback relating to waiting times for A&E:

Selected comments:

"When I asked the receptionist [about waiting times] he said you might wait between 5 minutes to 6 hours. I can't believe the level of service I received when I had a swollen broken hand. After 5 hours of wait, I just left for a different hospital as I couldn't trust my broken hand with any doctors there especially knowing that I was in extreme pain.

"More communication is needed when you're waiting."

Feedback on Waiting Times at A&E

- Other main themes that emerged from the feedback on A&E related to long wait times for children and pregnant women:

Selected comments:

"We waited 4 hours for children's A&E. I asked them a couple of times, how long [it is going to] be to see the doctor, they said after 2 patients. We waited 1.5 hours for 2 patients."

"We waited for too long in the corridor as an 8-month pregnant woman on an uncomfortable chair, not given a bed or comfy chair to sit on to wait."

"They are always understaffed [...] they keep the pregnant women waiting for hours, this is inhumane, my wife is 41 weeks pregnant she is having constant pain and they kept her sitting for hours."

Feedback on Waiting Times at A&E

- Some patients commented on the waiting area in A&E:

Selected comments:

"Well over 5 hours to wait with a serious head injury, understaffed, ultra unhelpful, not enough seats or even enough light."

"I went to the emergency [department] with excruciating pain and even though they told me the waiting time was 2 hours, I had to wait 5 hours to see a doctor in a waiting room that didn't have enough chairs (I had to sit on the floor for some of the time), it was freezing and vending machines weren't working to get water."

Feedback on Waiting Times at A&E

- Other things mentioned included having to wait for hours to then be told to go home and poor experience with staff:

Selected comments:

"Waited from 10 am till 8 pm only to be told to go home."

"Before being admitted I was left on the floor of A&E for over 24 hours. The staff there are very unprofessional I heard a staff member on duty go into a room to phone her dad to complain about how a patient smelt. [...] I dread having to come here with the way they treat people. They make me feel so small and like a problem for asking for help."

Feedback on Waiting Times at A&E

- Some patients shared very positive experiences at the A&E:

Selected comments:

"My partner was taken into hospital at very short notice after falling very ill as a result of undiagnosed Type 1. Her being seen in A&E was quick and efficient, particularly considering the current circumstances and pressures on these services. Doctors involved her and me (her chaperone) in well-aimed conversations about her condition and treatment, as young adults the fact that we were not condescended at any point was refreshing. Throughout the five days in the hospital, the medical and support staff were exceptional, attentive and caring, with particular credit to staff in Resus, emergency care and ward 11E."

"Visited the A&E with my 11-year-old daughter and we were pleasantly surprised after seeing the low-rating reviews. The building is very welcoming, modern and clean. The staff were friendly and although it was really busy, we were in and out in 2 hours."

Conclusion

Overall, it seems the main issue around waiting times for elective surgery relates to a lack of communication. Patients reported not being informed of the reason for delays or cancellation of their procedure as well as not being able to get hold of anyone over the phone.

This also applies to the waiting times at A&E: patients were not kept up to date on the wait times at A&E which resulted in frustration.

- Improving communication will help to manage patient expectations as well as keep them informed of the reasons for delays and cancellations.

Other recommendations for improvement:

- Improvement to the waiting area including access to water and other refreshments and comfortable chairs for those who are experiencing pain.

Next Steps:

- Going forward, quarterly reports will be produced from the feedback collected through our Patient Experience Programme and shared with key stakeholders
- Aim to increase face-to-face interactions with patients by visiting the Royal London

Hospital as well as other healthcare services with a team of volunteers to collect more feedback.

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