



Healthwatch Southwark

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Meeting 19th September 2023

What is Healthwatch?

- There is a Healthwatch in every area of England (created under the Health and Social Care Act 2012)
- Healthwatch Southwark is an **independent / statutory** organisation (funded by the local authority)
- Healthwatch Southwark is hosted by Community Southwark

Our vision is for Southwark residents to be able to receive the best possible health and social care services, appropriate for our diverse communities.



What we do

We are the independent champion for the patient voice!

- We listen to your experiences of health and social care services.
- We promote and support the involvement of local people in designing, providing and reviewing local health and social care services.
- We highlight the views of local people to improve health and social care services.



Access to Health and Social Care Services for Latin American Communities in Southwark Report



Why we did this project?



Latin American communities in Southwark should be heard, as they are missing from most studies on health inequalities.

Our aims:

- **Develop relationships.**
- **Provide a platform.**
- **Find out the issues and share them**
- **Help Latin American communities develop direct links to influence services.**



Methodology



A **survey** of people's experiences.



A **focus group** to address questions.



1-1 interviews to gain in-depth personal accounts.

This produced data focused on how people described their experiences.

Overall, we engaged with 67 Latin American residents in Southwark.



Challenges



We could not communicate directly with many respondents due to language barriers and our Community Health Ambassadors struggled to interpret dialects.



Community partners had limited capacity due to their own workloads.



Some community partners were reluctant to participate due to negative experiences working on similar projects in the past.

Solutions



Our partners from diverse, local Latin American organisations helped with interpretation.

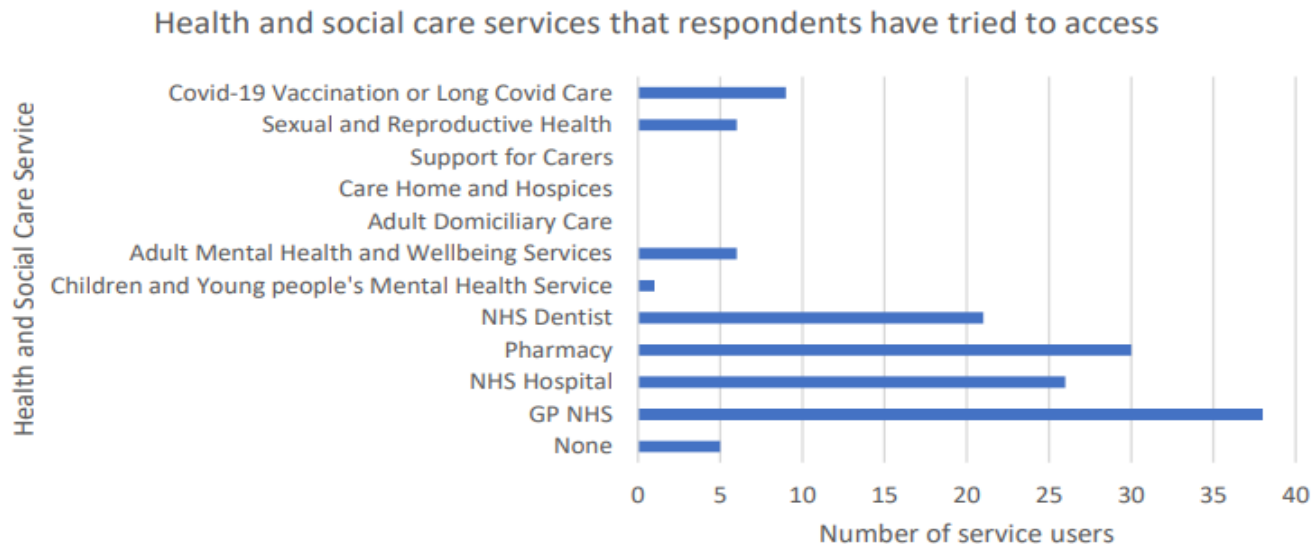


We supported community partners by facilitating networking opportunities and co-producing this event.

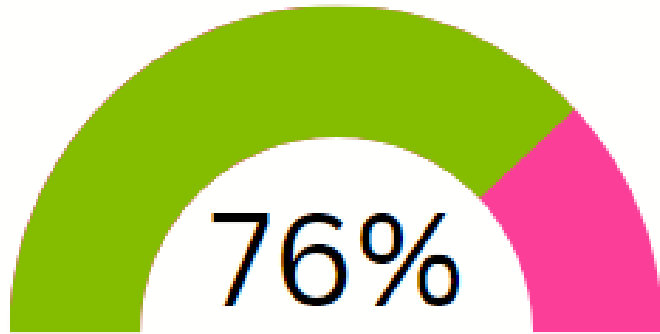


Key findings

- **91%** of respondents have tried to access at least one healthcare service in the last year.
- **70%** of respondents have tried to access a GP.
- Significant difference from Trust for London's (2016) finding that 1 in 6 Latin Americans in London have never been to a GP (Trust for London 2011).



Key findings



of respondents **experienced barriers or challenges** to accessing health and social care services.

Of these respondents, **the majority** experienced barriers to **accessing GPs.**



Themes

The barriers to accessing health and social care services can be grouped into three core issues:



1. Communications



2. Diversity and Inclusion



3. Appointments and Charges



Communications



Language Barriers

- Prevent people from communicating with healthcare staff and completing paperwork.
- Interpreters are not always available and reliable.
- Lack of healthcare information available in Spanish and Portuguese.

Entitlements

- Lack of information about services that migrants can use.

Online Communications

- E-letters, video/telephone appointments etc. are difficult to use, particularly for elderly people.
- High levels of digital exclusion in the Latin community.



Diversity and Inclusion



Staff behaviour

- Respondents felt discriminated against by healthcare staff, e.g. being rushed or not taken seriously.
- Most reports of rude staff behaviour were regarding GP receptionists.

Diversity monitoring

- Latin Americans have been excluded from and misrepresented on diversity monitoring forms, meaning that the different needs of Latin American communities have not been accounted for.

“We face discrimination because of how we look and how we speak and sometimes receptionists lack empathy or understanding about our experiences. They assume that we should all know how the healthcare system works.” - Quote from a respondent



Appointment and Charges



Appointments

- Complicated GP appointment booking process, long waiting times and lack of information provided during appointments.

Referrals and Staff Continuity

- Lack of communication between staff causes delayed and inconsistent treatment.

Charges

- GP charges for letters affect people's ability to access benefits etc.

These challenges are **made more significant by issues specific to the Latin American community**, e.g., waiting times for appointments are longer to facilitate interpreters.

“As elderly grandparents, we have to rely on our children to book and attend appointments with us because of our lack of English...trying to get an appointment at a time that suits them proves very difficult, so they have to take time off work to accompany us.” - Quote from a respondent



Recommendations



Communications

1. Provide information about healthcare services in Spanish and Portuguese online, in community media and in places that Latin Americans already visit.
2. Make interpreters more easily available and hire more Spanish-speaking staff.
3. Provide information about migrants' entitlements to healthcare in Spanish and Portuguese.
4. Reintroduce postal letters.
5. Increase face-to-face appointments.
6. Work with Latin American community organisations to share information.



Recommendations



Diversity and Inclusion

7. Record Latin American countries of origin and dialects spoken in diversity monitoring.
8. Diversity and inclusion training for healthcare staff.

Appointments and Charges

9. A GP booking system which gives patients more flexibility for when they can make a booking and the date and time of appointments.
10. Improve staff continuity and administration to make referrals easier.
11. Scrap charges for letters and documents, particularly for low-income patients.

Summary

- ❖ Most respondents have struggled to access healthcare, particularly **GPs**.
- ❖ Issues with communication, diversity and inclusion, and appointments and charges.
- ❖ The most significant challenge to Latin American healthcare access is **language barriers**.

Next steps



This report can be found on our:



[Website](#)



September newsletter

We will:



Share our findings with the community.



Present to key decision-makers and await formal responses.



Track progress of recommendations with feedback from the community.



HWS Latin American Health Event





How to contact us



Call us: 020 3848 6546



Email us:
info@healthwatchesouthwark.org



For more information visit:
<https://www.healthwatchesouthwark.org>

