



[Healthwatch Lambeth's work](#) in Vassall Ward (2015) revealed that most people would choose to visit their GP first if they needed help for a mental health concern. That research however, didn't tell us what it was actually like when someone approaches a GP for help.

What happens during and after a GP visit can affect a person's mental health in terms of their treatment, recovery and engagement with services. Therefore, in October 2016, we:

- Spoke to 58 people about their experiences of talking to their GP about their mental health concerns
- Visited all 48 GP websites to see what mental health information was available
- Visited 47 GP practice waiting rooms to see the environment
- Spoke to six GPs about their experiences of supporting people with mental health concerns.

These slides summarise key points from our three reports about:

[Talking to a GP](#)

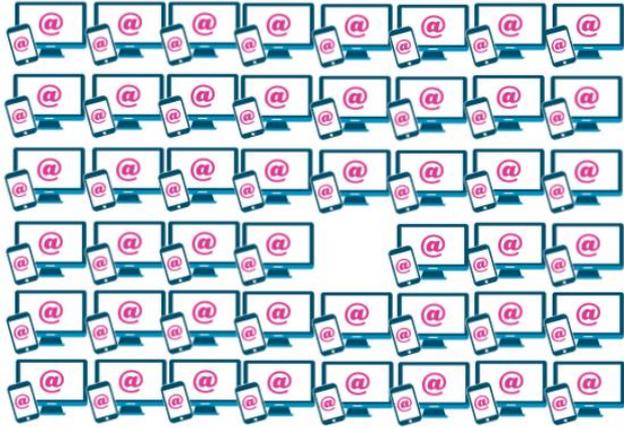
[GP waiting rooms](#)

[GP websites](#)

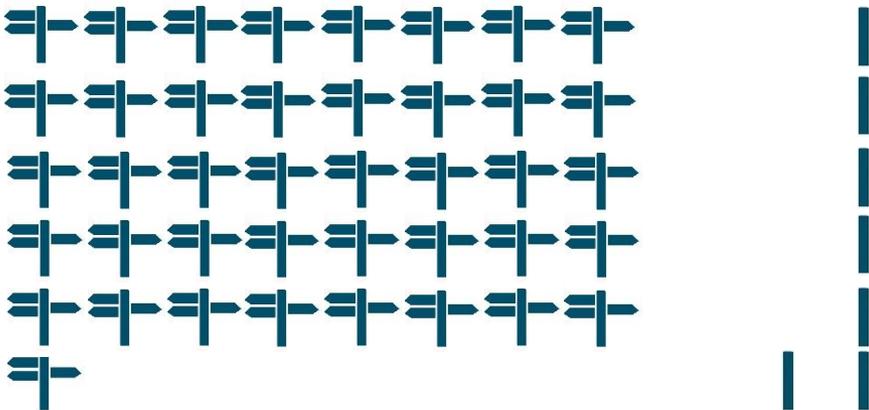
*click the links above to access the full reports on our website*



# Websites: What help is on offer? How can I access it?



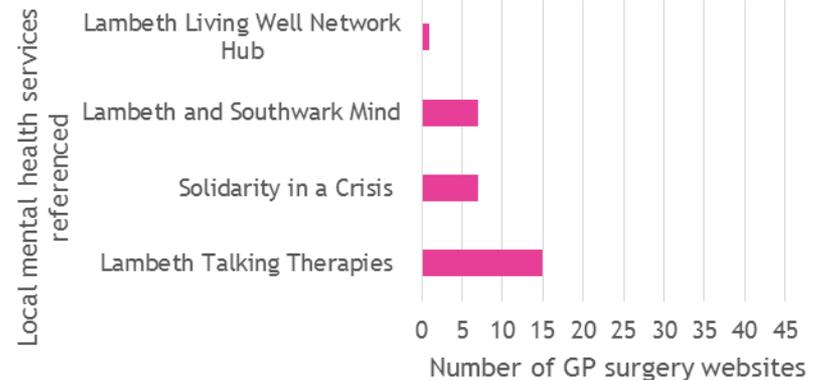
**47 of 48** GP websites had some mental health information **1** had nothing



**41 of 48** GP websites included signposting to local mental health services **7** did not



Language affects how people receive mental health information. We think phrases like “help you move forward” and “taking the first steps can be difficult” are encouraging.



We expected to see more consistent signposting to local mental health services



## Websites: Layout

Minet Green Health Practice

Lets see what we can do...

For Forms, Medicals, Test results and Certificates please visit **RECEPTION**

For Health reviews, including Asthma reviews and Smoking cessation please visit our **LONG TERM CONDITIONS** room.

Stop Smoking	Weight Management
Drugs and Alcohol	Mental Health
Maternity	Child Health
Sexual Health	Minor Injuries
Keeping Healthy	Diabetes
Hay fever	Flu Clinics



**13** websites had easy to find information, for example a 'Health A-Z' or an advice zone



**17** websites put mental health information under 'Long Term Conditions' and at the bottom of the page, making it harder to find

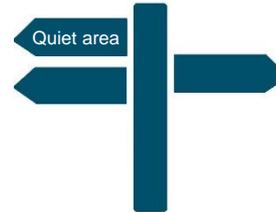




## Waiting rooms: Identified good practice which made the 'wait' a positive experience



Private, quiet room or area

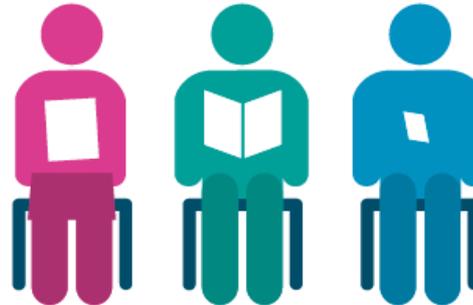


Friendly, attentive, receptionist who is sensitive to the privacy needs of patients



TV with useful videos and subtitles

Spacious seating situated away from reception area

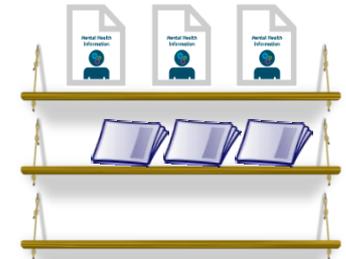
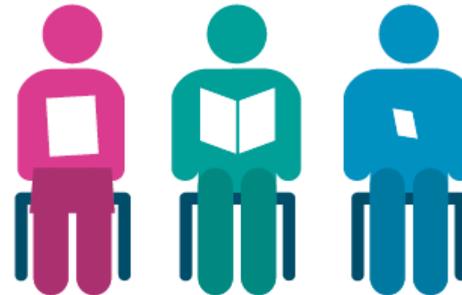


Neat and tidy leaflets and noticeboards, organised by theme



Separate area for children

Plants and paintings







# Patient experiences: How patients feel before an appointment





## Patient experiences: When an appointment is going well or badly

### GP:

- Friendly
- Caring
- Empathetic
- Supportive
- Asking explorative questions
- Caring
- Knowledgeable on medication, diagnoses and treatment
- Spends time looking things up.

### Patient:

- Feeling heard and understood
- Appreciate when the GP spends a longer time with them
- Validation of concerns.

### GP:

- Uncaring
- Uninterested
- Distracted
- Rushed
- Stigma around dual diagnosis
- Under pressure with not enough time.

### Patient:

- Short appointment times
- Not enough time to talk
- Not feeling heard or understood
- Feeling disregarded
- Feeling rushed.





# Patient experiences: After the appointment



## Talk to us...

### Emotional support:

- A key aspect of the support patients received
- Patients valued seeing the same GP, follow up calls and second appointments booked straight away.



### Medication:

- Some patients were happy with the medication they were prescribed
- GPs told us they consider medication on a case by case basis.



### Advice and information:

- Patients valued reassurance and validation of concerns
- Many received advice on next steps regarding diagnosis and/or treatment.

## THIS WAY

### Onward referrals:

- Some patients were happy with the onward referral they received.



## Talk to us...

### Emotional support:

- Some patients felt let down and ignored by their GPs
- Some told us they received no support which left them feeling alone and isolated.



### Medication:

- Some patients were not prescribed the medication they wanted; others were prescribed medication they did not want
- Patients told us they wanted more support to reduce dosages, or more frequent or comprehensive medication reviews.



### Advice and information:

- Some patients were frustrated that they could not get more in-depth practical advice around housing and benefits
- GPs struggle to support clients with social issues.

## THIS WAY

### Onward referrals:

- Some patients were not referred to any specialist mental health support
- Some not always referred to the specialist services they wanted
- Some GPs were unaware of specific services
- Self-referral was a barrier for some
- Patients wanted more choice of services.



## Summary recommendations

- 1. GP surgeries should advertise patients' rights in booking appointments** such as the right to a double or an emergency appointment and the right to see a particular GP, to ensure patient's get the most out of their visit.
- 2. Increase GP training and understanding regarding mental health** to assure consistency of GP skills in communication, knowledge and confidence to work effectively with mental health service users.
- 3. Clinical support for patients with mental health concerns must be strategic and person-centred.** NHS Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) should equip Lambeth GPs with the necessary information to direct patients towards the most relevant local services; and GPs should ensure that treatment plans are developed with informed and empowered service users.
- 4. Improve support to manage 'the wait' between GP and specialist services** by developing and disseminating guidance around available support such as local mental health sanctuaries or peer mentoring schemes, which will aid GPs in building a care plan for service users in interim periods.
- 5. NHS Lambeth CCG should require and support all GP practices to adhere to a minimum quality standard with respect to the dissemination of mental health information via GP surgery websites and waiting rooms,** and encourage GP practices to work with their Patient Participation Groups to achieve this. We've suggested a checklist.



## Further information

To read about the ‘GP experiences’ mental health project in more detail, please click on the links below to access the full reports on our website:

- [People’s experiences of talking to their GP about their mental health](#)
- [How supportive are Lambeth GP waiting rooms for those with mental health concerns?](#)
- [Mental health information on Lambeth GP websites](#)

For further information, please get in touch with us:

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