

To: Ruman Kallar (Healthwatch Southwark)

7 March 2024

**By email only**

Dear Ruman and Healthwatch colleagues,

Dear Ruman,

Thank you for sharing Healthwatch Southwark's report 'Access to Health and Social Care services for Latin American Communities in Southwark' with the Southwark team at NHS South East London and with our partner organisations within Partnership Southwark.

The report provides valuable insights, collates experiences and has highlighted helpful recommendations. When receiving a report like this, we look to review and respond to the recommendations presented. We have also shared the report with practices across the borough. We hope you will find our responses, provided in the table below, helpful.

We recognise that access to health care services is a concern for many communities in the borough and there is always more work to do to support people in Southwark to equitably access services. We hope that the actions we've set below will help to address the recommendations and to reduce inequalities within access to health and social care for Latin American communities in the borough.

We have not included a response to **Recommendation 10** of the report, as we believe this primarily relates to services provided by Trusts in the borough.

We will review the above actions and update Healthwatch Southwark on our progress by the beginning of September 2024.

Thank you again for the report and alerting us to the health inequalities currently faced by our Latin American community.

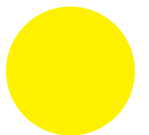
Yours sincerely

Martin Wilkinson  
Acting Place Executive Lead  
Partnership Southwark  
NHS South East London

No.	Healthwatch recommendation	Summary of NHS South East London's response / actions to be taken, where applicable	To be completed by (date)	Lead / department
1	Provide information about health and social care services in Spanish and Portuguese online, in community media and in hard copies disseminated in spaces that are frequented by Latin American communities.	<p>The NHS South East London website has a translation tool that can translate all information on our website into different languages including Spanish and Portuguese. has a link to our language support services.</p> <p>To support this recommendation further, our communications and engagement colleagues will work across partners to produce an information leaflet in Spanish and Portuguese to explain how the English health system works. This piece of work will seek to build on the work undertaken within the 'use the right service' campaign nationally and developed further within south east London. The information will be designed to help people from Spanish and Portuguese speaking communities to access the health system in Southwark in a timely, effective and equitable way.</p>	Ongoing  June 2024	Communications and Engagement  Communications and Engagement
2	Improve accessibility of interpreters. Recruit more Spanish-speaking staff where possible, as respondents specified they want to be able to communicate with healthcare providers directly. Primary care services should reflect local communities and Spanish-speaking staff should be available on site.	<p>We work closely with primary care providers (GP practices) in the borough and have commissioned DA Languages to provide translation services for GP practices across Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham until April 2025.</p> <p>We continuously monitor this service and work with DA Languages to improve it where possible. Currently, in Southwark, Spanish is the most requested language.</p> <p>Our organisation is currently working to re-commission this service and will be engaging with residents, service users and staff to help us design the service and then to select the most appropriate and effective provider. The insight provided by this report will help to inform this, alongside further public engagement activity.</p>	April 2025	Commissioners across Lambeth/ Southwark and Lewisham

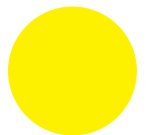
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		<p>Although we employ staff who speak Portuguese and Spanish, it is not possible to confirm the exact numbers, as this information is not recorded in HR records. We seek to make our application process open and attractive to all. We are also working with partners to advertise local roles at job surgeries for Health &amp; Care Jobs which have been developed by NHS SEL's Hub Team. The Hub aims to support local people into work opportunities in health and social care and is a partnership of health and care providers and employment services. The next Southwark event is taking place on 25 March 2024.</p>	Ongoing	HR Directors and NHS SEL Hub Team
3	<p>Provide information about migrants' entitlements to health and social care in Spanish and Portuguese. Co-ordinate with Latin American community organisations and the Home Office to disseminate this information.</p>	<p>Currently, we do not provide written information regarding the entitlement of healthcare to migrants in Spanish or Portuguese languages.</p> <p>Throughout 2021 and 2022, we worked with Latin American community organisations to emphasise about Southwark GP practices signing up to become Safe Surgeries. Everyone living in England has the right to free care from a GP and work hard with practices to make sure no one in our community is excluded from healthcare.</p> <p>This means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you register with a GP Practice, they might ask for ID or proof of address.</li> <li>• However, if you don't have any and you live in the practice area, you can still register.</li> <li>• Your nationality or immigration status does not affect your right to register with a practice.</li> <li>• They won't ask you for immigration documents</li> </ul>	June 2024	Communications and engagement team/borough Primary Care team



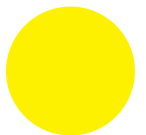
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		<p>when you register at a practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you are worried about giving your address, please let them know. Your information is safe with them.</li> </ul> <p>We will continue with this work and seek to work closely with Latin American community organisations to disseminate the information leaflet described above in the answer to recommendation one.</p>		
4	Reintroduce offline communications such as postal letters.	<p>Our organisation is a 'digital first' organisation. This means that in order to be more sustainable and to reduce the cost of our communication activity, we will look to communicate digitally where possible.</p> <p>However, we recognise that this isn't the best way for everyone and printed materials or the request for phone calls or meetings is available to all.</p>	All Ongoing	All
5	Increase the availability of face-to-face appointments, particularly for patients with additional needs.	<p>GPs and other primary care professionals within general practice are providing record numbers of patient appointments. This is done across a variety of platforms, with the majority conducted face-to-face.</p> <p>We will continue to work closely with Primary Care Networks and Practices in Southwark to ensure that patients can access the most appropriate appointments in a timely manner.</p>	Ongoing	Primary Care and Digital



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6	Liaise with Latin American community organisations to disseminate information to Latin Americans in Southwark and facilitate ongoing review of health and social care accessibility for this group.	<p>We will seek to work closely with groups and further develop relationships developed through Partnership Southwark, the Community Southwark Latin American network and a grants panel.</p> <p>We will also feedback progress to Healthwatch Southwark as we address the recommendations in this report.</p>	June 2024	All
7	Revise diversity monitoring forms to include Latin Americans and capture internal differences such as country of origin and dialects spoken.	<p>We will work with partners through our business intelligence team and the public health team at Southwark Council to better understand the communities within the borough and how we can better capture information associated with them. NHS South East London's public engagement activity is underpinned by a consistent diversity and monitoring form which seeks to better understand the communities of individuals responding to our work. This will be continuously monitored and developed to ensure we hear and reflect the diverse voices within Southwark and South East London</p>	Ongoing	Communications and Engagement / Business Intelligence
8	Diversity and inclusion training for health staff, e.g. receptionists.	<p>NHS South East London and all practices are required to undertake mandatory training on diversity and inclusion. We also support practices to seek out further training as identified by those organisations.</p> <p>We would encourage members of the Latin American community to raise any issues encountered with Healthwatch Southwark or directly with us at <a href="mailto:southwark.cbc@Selondonics.nhs.uk">southwark.cbc@Selondonics.nhs.uk</a> to allow us to investigate and to help if possible.</p>	Ongoing	Primary Care / CBC team



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9	A GP booking system which gives patients more flexibility for when they can make a booking and the date and time of appointments	<p>Access to GP appointments is a concern raised by different communities across the country.</p> <p>We are working with primary care, national systems (the NHS app), as well as other providers, such as NHS 111 to offer a variety of ways to book appointments. The demand for appointments is high and practice staff are working hard to meet the challenges of offering timely and compassionate care in an accessible and flexible way. We will continue to work with partners to improve the booking system wherever possible.</p>	Ongoing	Primary Care / Digital Team
11	Scrap charges for letters and other documentation, particularly for low-income patients.	<p>There are no charges for letters and other documentation from NHS South East London.</p> <p>Individual GP practices may charge for letters and copies of certain documents. Patients should be able to access their notes for free online, usually through the NHS App. Practice teams are able to respond best when given clear reasons for the request. Practices can also refer to social prescribers for further support with proving the right information for applications.”</p>	Ongoing	Place Executive Lead

