



## Healthwatch Southwark

Do Southwark GPs offer people interpreting services?

March 2016

## **Healthwatch Southwark: Who we are & what we do**

Healthwatch Southwark is the local independent champion for health and social care services in Southwark. We want all people in Southwark to be able to access the best health and social care services possible.

We inform people about how to get involved in their local health and social care services. We encourage people to tell us what they like and what needs improving, and we work in various ways to ensure that different voices are equally heard.

Healthwatch Southwark uses people's feedback to inform those who design, deliver and commission local public health and social care services.

We sit on several boards and committees, so we can effectively use our influence to provide constructive insight and recommendations about how to improve services and make them more accessible to those who need them.

For more information, visit our website: [www.healthwatchsouthwark.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsouthwark.co.uk)

## **Why check if Southwark GPs offer people interpreting services?**

Our engagement around [GP access](#) told us that GP surgeries do not always provide interpreting services. People told us that when an interpreter was not available, the quality of the GP service

they received was poorer as a result of not having someone there who could interpret. Difficulties arising from communication barriers are therefore a striking cause of concern.

Some facts and figures about Southwark:

- The 2011 Census highlighted that Southwark has a higher than average rate of short-term residents born outside the UK.
- According to the Demographic Factsheet 2014, the population is ethnically diverse - 60.3% of Southwark residents are from an ethnic minority background.
- According to Southwark Council, around 120 languages are spoken in Southwark. In 11% of households, no member speaks English as a first language.

Growing populations and increasing ethnic diversity across the borough will also lead to a further diversification of cultural and linguistic need.

**All Southwark GPs have access to interpreting services.** This is provided by Language Line which is commissioned by NHS Southwark CCG.

Language Line can provide both face-to-face interpreting as well as telephone interpreting, although the former would need to be booked in advance whereas the latter can be provided with little/no notice. Use of this service does not cost individual practices.

By checking if Southwark GPs offer people interpreting services, we will get an idea of how many are not aware of this service they have access to. We will also know what advice and information they give to people.

## How we checked if Southwark GPs are offering interpreting services...

On the week commencing 21st March 2016, the Healthwatch Southwark team phoned all 44 GP surgeries.

Once through to reception we explained that our neighbour was registered with their GP, she wants to make an appointment to see the Doctor, but she doesn't speak much English and asked whether they could offer an interpreting service.

We then noted:

- If they said the surgery could provide an interpreting service for a GP appointment.
- If they said yes - did they give information about how to go about booking this and what it would involve
- If they said no - did they give a suggestion of what to do instead

If the receptionist said that they could provide an interpreting service, we then asked if our neighbour's son (who was not registered with their GP) could use this service to register as he also doesn't speak much English.

We then noted:

- If they said the surgery could provide an interpreting service to support someone registering.
- If they said yes - did they give information about how to go about booking this and what it would involve
- If they said no - did they give a suggestion of what to do instead

We are aware that if we had called on a different date, at a different time, or spoken to a different receptionist, we could have captured completely different results. This report is a snapshot of what we were told when we called each practice at this specific time.

## Summary of findings from our review

We called all 44 GP practices.

- **35** practices said they could provide an interpreting service for a GP appointment.
  - Of these, **15** practices mentioned a telephone interpreter only, **6** practices mentioned a face-to-face interpreter only, and **8** practices mentioned they could provide both.
  - **9** practices explained that they book double appointments for patients who require interpreting service / advised patients request it.
  - **7** practices mentioned the Language Line service.

- **8** practices said they could not provide an interpreting service for a GP appointment.
  - Of these, **6** practices suggested bringing along a family member/friend to interpret.

If they practice said they could provide an interpreting service for a GP appointment (34), we then asked if this was available for GP registration.

- **8** said they could provide an interpreting service to help with GP registration.
- **26** said they could not provide an interpreting service to help with GP registration.
  - Of these, **12** practices suggested bringing along a family member/friend to interpret.

See the 'full breakdown of the data' section of this report for a breakdown of each GP practice's response.



## Recommendations

This report will be shared with:

- NHS England and NHS Southwark CCG who jointly commission primary care services - Southwark CCG also commission interpreting services.
- All 44 Southwark GP practices.

**All patients requesting interpreting services should be offered it, both for support in registering with a GP and during appointment.**

**Recommendation 1:** All receptionist staff to be given training and

information about interpreting services to ensure consistent messaging and equal access for patients across Southwark. They should be supported to understand the importance of offering interpreting services.

**Recommendation 2:** All GP reception areas to clearly display information about interpreting offers for patients and details about Language Line.

**Recommendation 3:** Reception staff to offer a double appointment when an interpreting service is requested.

**Recommendation 4:** When Southwark CCG review interpreting services in primary care, they should seek to understand why this service is not always offered to patients, monitor the use of this service, and engage with GPs about use of Language Line.

**Recommendation 5:** Invite Language Line to present on what their service offers and how to use it at Practice Managers Forum meetings, Practice Nurses Forum meetings and through GP Protected Learning Time.

**Recommendation 6:** Healthwatch Southwark will continue to inform residents, and voluntary and community sector organisations that support them, about what they can expect from GP services in relation to interpreting services.

**Recommendation 7:** Healthwatch Southwark will carry out this check again at a later date to see if information provided by surgeries improves.



## Full breakdown of the data...

Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting services?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
Acorn Surgery	Yes.	Can arrange for a face to face interpreter to be present. Takes about a week.  Phone up first thing tomorrow morning to get an appointment.	No	Was very difficult to get through to this GP practice - had to try numerous times over different days.  Receptionist was a bit hesitant and unsure.
Albion	Yes.	Told to book a routine appointment.  Then Doctor will decide during appointment if telephone interpreter is needed.	No.  Suggested bringing someone along if he needs help registering.	
Avicenna Health Centre	No.  Suggested the person bring a family member with them so they can interpret.			
Aylesbury Medical Practice	No.  Suggested the person bring a family member with them so they can interpret.			



Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting service?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
Bermondsey and Landsdowne Medical Mission	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request. Interpreting provided by telephone or face-to-face.	No.	
Bermondsey Spa Medical Centre	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request. Interpreting provided face-to-face.	No. All new patients get a health check and an interpreter could be booked for this.	Told first available appointment in 3 weeks time.
Blackfriars Medical Practice	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request. Interpreting provided face-to-face.	No.	
Borough Medical Centre (Dr Misra)	No. No information given about alternative.			Woman was quite rude on the phone and wanted to hurry the call.
Borough Medical Centre (Dr Sharma)	No. Suggested the person bring a family member with them so they can interpret.			
Camberwell Green Practice	Yes.	Write a note for reception to book appointment with interpreter.  Appointments can be 2 weeks ahead for interpreter to be present.	Yes.  If needed this can be arranged.	Spanish speaking receptionist available too.  Helpful manner in dealing with the query.

Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting service?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
Concordia Melbourne Grove	Yes.	Come in or call before 11.30 to get a same day appointment and request a telephone interpreter.	Unsure. Maybe a telephone interpreter.	
Concordia Parkside Medical Centre	Yes.	Need to book a double appointment as the doctor will need to access the interpreter on the phone to have a 3 way conversation.	Unsure. Will need to fill out registration form and bring in with ID and proof of address, reception will try to register.	Named the Language Line service.  Helpful manner in dealing with the query.
DMC Chadwick	Yes.	Either call or go to surgery at 8am to book appointment for same day.  Once in appointment, doctor uses telephone interpreter.	Yes.  By telephone.	
Dulwich Medical Centre	Yes.	Come in or ring and request an interpreter.  We book double appointments.  Interpreting provided by telephone.	Yes.  Would use telephone interpreters again (better to have some notice of this).	

Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting service?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
East Street Surgery	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request. Interpreting provided face-to-face.	No. Suggested a family member help to do this.	
Elm Lodge Surgery	Yes.	Need to ring and request an interpreter. Receptionist will book a double appointment.	No.	Named Language Line as the service. Didn't know about interpreting services so went and asked.
Falmouth Road Surgery	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request. Interpreting provided by telephone.	No. Suggested a family member help to do this.	
Forrest Hill Road Group Practice	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request. Not known whether face-to-face or telephone.	No.	Wasn't sure at first, and had to ask someone.
Grange Road	Yes.	Phone up and request interpreter - receptionist can make note for doctor. Face to face is possible but quite new here. Telephone is better.	No.	A bit rude about how it is difficult to arrange interpreters for people registering with the GP



Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting service?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
Hambleden Clinic	Yes.	The doctor dials on speaker to an interpreter and there are several languages that they cover.	No.  Online registration available if someone is able to help them fill out the form.	Named the Language Line service.  Helpful manner in dealing with the query.
Hurley @ Lister	Yes.	Need to phone up/go in and request - tell us which language  Interpreting provided face to face where possible.	No.	Named the Language Line service.
Lister Primary Care Centre (Dr Arumugaraasah)	Yes.	Told to book an appointment and say what language is needed, the receptionist will then email to request an interpreter.  If they are available they can do it the same day, if not it might be a week or so later.	Yes, this service is available to everyone.	Mentioned that Spanish interpreters are higher in demand and might need to wait longer for an interpreter to attend.
Lister Primary Care Centre (Dr Hossain)	No.	None.	No support available.	
Lordship Lane Surgery	Yes.	Phone or go ask at reception to request face to face interpreter.  Don't have a telephone interpreting service.	No.	

Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting service?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
Maddock Way Surgery	No. They suggested the person bring a family member with them so they can interpret.			Wasn't sure and asked someone else.
Manor Place Surgery	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request. Receptionist will book a double appointment. Interpreting provided by telephone.	No. Suggested a family member help to do this.	
New Mill Street Surgery	No. They suggested the person bring a family member with them so they can interpret.			
Nunhead Surgery	Yes.	Phone /go in and request an appointment with an interpreter provided by telephone.	No. Said that aren't registering patients at the moment.	Bit impatient but then reassuring at the end.
Old Kent Road Surgery	Yes.	Come to reception to book an appointment and interpreter depending on the language needed.	No. Suggested person writing down what that they wanted to register and giving it to reception.	

Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting service?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
Park Medical Centre	Yes.	Ring up and request an appointment with telephone interpreter.  Will book a double appointment.	Yes.  Can use interpreting services. Told that some people bring someone along to interpret but that's not always ideal due to confidentiality.	
Penrose Surgery	Yes.	Can either bring a family member to the appointment or can arrange a telephone interpreter.	No.  Suggested a family member help to do this.	
Princess Street Group Practice	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request.  Interpreting provided by telephone or face-to-face.	No.  Suggested a family member help to do this.	
Queens Road Surgery	Yes.	There is a telephone system where the doctor puts the interpreter on speaker phone.	Yes.  There is a form to fill in and reception can help if needed.	Helpful manner in dealing with the query.
Silverlock Medical Centre	Yes.	Request an appointment with an interpreter.  We make a note for interpreting to be provided by telephone during appointment (Dr can see this on record).	No.	

Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting service?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
Sir John Kirk Close Surgery	Yes.	Book a double appointment and say that an interpreter is needed.  There are face to face and over the phone interpreters.	No.  Told a friend or family member could help them register.	
St Giles Surgery	Yes.	There is a telephone service, you need to make a double appointment and they will call the interpreter when the patient is in with the doctor.	No.  New patient would need to bring someone in to help them register, perhaps a family member.	Named the Language Line service.  Helpful manner in dealing with the query.
St James Church Surgery	Yes.	Phone up/go in and request a telephone interpreter.  Told that they could organise face to face interpreter too, if available.	Yes.  Said could youse telephone interpreter. Told people also bring someone with them to help.	Referred to Language Line.
Sternhall Lane Surgery	Yes.	Make a double appointment; it is a 3 way conversation with the doctor, the patient and the interpreter.	No.  Need someone to complete the online form.	Offered walk in options if the time to arrange an interpreter was too long.  Helpful manner in dealing with the query.

Name of GP	Do they offer interpreting service?	Can they give details of how to go about organising this?	If someone needs help registering, can they provide an interpreter for this?	Other comments
Surrey Docks	Yes.	<p>Phone or come in and request an interpreter.</p> <p>Told double appointment would be booked.</p> <p>If know in advance can arrange face-to-face interpreter.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>Suggested bringing someone to help interpret.</p>	<p>Named Language Line as the service.</p>
The Gardens	Yes.	<p>Request an interpreter by phone or visiting surgery.</p> <p>Told they will organise an interpreter and then text patient with a time for the appointment.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>Could bring someone with them if they wanted to.</p>	<p>Not normally a problem to register as long as they have the right forms.</p>
The Trafalgar Surgery	<p>No.</p> <p>They suggested the person bring a family member with them so they can interpret.</p>		<p>No.</p> <p>Could bring someone with them if they wanted to.</p>	
Villa Street Medical Centre	Yes.	<p>If it is a same day appointment the doctor can call an interpreter over the phone.</p> <p>For face to face interpreters, they would need a forward appointment to arrange this.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>They can come to reception with ID and proof of address documents, we will try to sort out at reception but if we can't we call the interpreter if we need to.</p>	<p>Helpful manner in dealing with the query.</p>

306 Medical Centre	Yes.	Need to book an appointment and request.  Receptionist makes note for doctor to use telephone interpreter during appointment.	No.	
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