

Wexham and Frimley Park Hospitals – Service Users' Views

2025 review



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What we did

Our hospital visiting programme has been running since September 2023. We have spoken to hundreds of patients, visitors, volunteers and staff at Frimley and Wexham Park hospitals.

The programme has complemented the work we have done through Enter and View visits, community engagement and other project work. It has also supported our promotion of local Healthwatch and encouraged more people to talk to us and get involved in our activities.

We are committed to seeking out examples of best practice so that we can shine a light on 'what good looks like' and help our system partners learn from it. Alongside this, we have shared examples of feedback which highlight improvements that patients wanted to see at our acute hospitals in East Berkshire.

We are passionate about ensuring the voices and experiences of local people influence decisions and improvements across the sector.

With this in mind, we are providing this summary of service visits during 2025. This report also includes some insights gathered through other community engagement. We have shared immediate updates with the patient experience lead at Frimley ICS and other partners.



Who did we speak to?

Between January and December 2025, we asked a diverse range of people in a variety of settings across East Berkshire to share their experiences of any health services they or a loved one had used at Frimley Park and Wexham Park hospitals. The majority of our feedback was gathered through on-site hospital visits, where we spoke to those who had recently received treatment or care.

What did we hear?

Overall Themes

We received feedback relating to a range of services operating across Frimley Park and Wexham Park hospitals, with consistent themes emerging across both sites. High-quality clinical care and compassionate staff were highlighted as strengths; patients frequently shared praise for frontline staff at both hospitals.

However, issues were identified with communication, discharge processes, waiting times and support for vulnerable groups. In particular, older adults, people with dementia, people with learning disabilities and carers reported barriers to accessing timely treatment and care.

We have shared the feedback received across the year below.

January–February 2025

Frimley Park

Feedback reflected inconsistent care quality. Positive experiences included high-quality interpreter support and good cancer care. However, significant concerns were raised about poor post-operative discharge, lack of reasonable adjustments for dementia patients and poor continuity in CAMHS staffing.

Support for patients with dementia

Two carers told us that waiting for appointments can be very anxiety-inducing for their partners who have dementia. If there are delays, this can be a difficult experience for both patient and carer. One individual noted that he felt some priority should be given to those with dementia at A&E, given the extreme anxiety they are likely to experience.

Continuity of care

One individual shared difficulties feeling comfortable around changing healthcare professionals – they felt assessments would be more straightforward and clinicians could better monitor patient outcomes if care was more consistent.

“When I see CAMHS I want to see the same doctor regularly. If a new doctor comes every time it makes me feel awkward. I'm really quiet so having to get to know someone new is difficult. They tell each other about my medication but it's not personal information so I have to retell my story.”

Positive interpreter feedback

We received positive feedback that a Cantonese interpreter provided for one patient was ‘very good’. Staff proactively offered to arrange translator support for an appointment that was expected to be quite in-depth.

Unhappy with treatment plan

One patient felt they were discharged too early and another shared that they did not receive the antibiotics they needed.

Wexham Park

Major pressure points included long A&E waits of 4–12 hours, communication breakdowns around appointments and difficulties accessing specialist support such as MS nursing. Some positive experiences were recorded in maternity, general care and cleanliness. Discharge processes were particularly problematic, especially for older patients requiring transport.

Waiting times

Several patients shared concerns about waiting for treatment and care, both on site and prior to visiting if a referral had been made. Comments on a lack of

timely support were made in relation to A&E, neurology and cardiology services, as well as one patient who was left waiting in the postnatal ward.

“There was not good support with feeding especially on the night shift, which was pretty understaffed. You would wait 40 minutes to be helped and then your boob would be grabbed and put in the baby's mouth and you were left to it. A maternity support worker asked ‘why are you crying?’ and was quite abrupt.”

Access and communication challenges

Three patients shared issues with getting through to staff to change appointments, chase referrals and access specialist support, and subsequent lack of contact around next steps. This related to getting hold of an MS nurse, poor communication around medical follow-up required after discharge from maternity services, and an ENT referral.

“I had an ENT referral and I couldn't make the date on the letter. I tried ringing the contact number given and couldn't get through. I tried several times. I tried lots of alternative numbers that people gave me and eventually I found a number that had an answering machine, so I left a message. I've no idea if this was actually received by anybody because nobody got back to me. I just wanted an alternative appointment, but I don't know if they think I didn't turn up and I've been struck off or if there's another appointment in the system that I'll get. There needs to be better communication.”

Improved signage for children's clinic

We spoke to a parent who had an overall positive experience visiting a paediatric clinic with her child: an easy-to-arrange appointment booked through their GP, a pleasant waiting area with toys available and not too long a wait. However, the signage to the clinic could be better. They had arrived by taxi and had not known where to go.

Positive feedback

Patients told us that they thought the hospital was clean, staff were kind and they felt cared for. Specifically, information about aftercare was good, and one individual was very impressed by digital monitoring offered at home. We also received some positive feedback on maternity care.

“GP and all the midwives at Wexham were very helpful during my pregnancy and baby delivery. I prefer face-to-face appointments with dedicated service for women's health”

Lack of support on discharge

One older adult we met told us that their partner (of a similar age) was recently sent home without appropriate support in place for them to navigate steps in a wheelchair. They felt capability assessments for older people on discharge were overly generous, leading to unmet needs later on.

March–April 2025

Frimley Park

Strong praise was given for cancer services, A&E and children's mental health support. However, communication was an issue for people with complex conditions – one individual shared that they would find updates helpful while waiting for treatment or results, to provide reassurance they were 'still in the system'.

“Cancer out-patients are very good. I have been coming here for 3-4 years and they always run on time, the staff are fabulous. I'm very grateful to the NHS, without the treatment I have I wouldn't still be here.”

We also received positive feedback on:

- Physiotherapy
- Neurotherapy
- Oral and maxillary care

May–June 2025

Frimley Park

Patients reported positive experiences in fracture and cataract clinics. Discharge communication was perceived as poor, and A&E waiting times

continued to remain lengthy. Issues with navigation around the hospital also emerged due to departmental changes.

"I used to come to Frimley and know exactly where to go for my outpatients appointments. For some reason they have moved departments around, lots of people not knowing where to go."

Communication

One patient told us that short-stay inpatient care had been excellent for his wife; however, she was being discharged that day and he had no idea when. Better updates would be helpful. Other patients also fed back that they and their relatives would benefit from improved communication around the expected day and time of discharge from hospital.

Positive feedback

Good timekeeping and patient, understanding approaches from staff were highlighted, and one individual shared positive sentiments about an uncrowded waiting room for Outpatients 5.

"I had a bad arm fracture and have had several appointments. They are usually on time, they always take time to explain everything to me and answer my questions."

Wexham Park

There was mixed feedback on service provision during May and June, with concerns about long oncology waits but strong praise for urgent cardiac care. Declining quality of the IBD helpline was a concern. Overall, communication and responsiveness varied by department.

Access and choice

A male patient, who chose not to disclose which clinic he was attending, reported that he prefers to make appointments by phone rather than using the website, as this feels more convenient. He had attended a week early by mistake, but staff had been polite, pleasant and accommodating.

July, August and September 2025

Frimley Park

A traumatic birth story from previous years resurfaced for one patient, who shared experiences of poor communication at the time. Others we spoke to fed back that screening and operations were delayed; they felt there is a need for diagnostics closer to home.

Access and choice

Mixed sentiments were shared around transport options, with local bus services to Frimley varying in quality and concerns raised around support available for those who don't drive or are anxious about parking. Some older adults (aged 65+) also noted a preference for face-to-face appointments over virtual offers, and that it was easy to become digitally excluded.

"The patient transport service is inadequate. I had cancer and an amputation. I live alone and didn't have anyone to take me to my appointment. When I contacted patient transport about my appointment in four weeks' time they were already fully booked."

Discharge

Long waits in discharge lounges were referenced, with the hospital discharge process as a whole described as a 'hit-and-miss affair'. Waiting for medication and lack of access to food and water when waiting in the lounge for long periods were perceived as key issues.

Wexham Park

Positive feedback

One RBWM resident reported swift and high-quality care after arriving at the hospital by ambulance. Follow-up service provision for a broken arm and a separate gastric matter was also effective, with timely appointments and good communication.

Communication

We gathered mixed views on communication standards at Wexham Park over the summer, with one individual describing a consultant at an outpatient clinic as having a 'poor bedside manner' and others raising lack of information on mobility support available after appointments as an issue. Elsewhere, staff were regarded as 'lovely and caring'; however, there was confusion about what to do about missing blood test results.

Cleanliness, hygiene and infection control

Patients were dissatisfied with cleanliness standards and told us they thought the hospital 'could do with a lick of paint'.

"It could be a lot cleaner, especially the toilets. Sometimes it's so dirty. People have to use them as we are here at the hospital. I have come to Wexham to have blood tests."

Dignity and respect

One patient and their partner noted that having those with and without dementia mixed together on wards made rest and sleep challenging for all. They also felt that dementia patients were not getting enough support, particularly at mealtimes, describing staff as seeming very busy and unaware of any issues when food plates were left in front of patients without any help to eat in place.

We also received negative feedback on:

- Long waits, late running clinics and overcrowded waiting rooms.
- Limited blood test appointment availability.
- Medication errors.
- Postponed operations.

October – December 2025

Frimley Park

Treatment and care

During the autumn-to-winter period, high praise was recorded for cancer care, day surgery and A&E.

“The breast cancer care I have received at Frimley has been outstanding. I have been treated with care, kindness, compassion. The staff are incredible and the support services the same.”

However, discharge processes remained disorganised, and communication during urgent care episodes did not meet expectations.

“On the day my husband was discharged, I wasn't informed until later in the day so I had little time to prepare for him coming home. He had been in the lounge since 10:30. When I asked why I wasn't told earlier they said they were waiting for his medication. When I checked in his bag, the medication was in there. The ward hadn't told the discharge lounge that he already had the medication; obviously a breakdown in communication.”

Waiting times in dermatology were perceived as long, and specialist lymphoedema support was notably lacking. Parking costs also emerged as a financial burden for older adults.

Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

One individual shared thoughts on the planned new hospital: that the new site needs to be designed to better cater for those with learning disabilities and/or autism. They felt that those waiting in outpatients, being discharged or using other hospital services are not having their additional needs met within the current set-up.

They were pleased to hear that Healthwatch East Berkshire is working with the Frimley New Hospital Programme team to listen to local groups, including the local learning disability and autism community, to ensure their voices are heard and integrated into the rebuild project plans.

Wexham Park

Patients continued to experience long referral times for specialist conditions such as scoliosis, with limited control over who they see. Communication quality varied between hospital specialists. One patient told us about a positive experience where a cardiologist took 45 minutes to discuss the benefits and risks of a major operation.

Outcomes

- We shared positive feedback and congratulations with the patient experience lead to be passed on to individuals and teams, contributing to increased morale in the NHS workforce.
- We have regularly attended the Frimley ICS Patient Experience Forum and System Quality Group, sharing patient feedback in real time, including issues raised as well as best practice highlighted. This enabled learning to be taken on board and any relevant actions taken in a timely way, ensuring patient voices were heard and acted on quickly.
- Healthwatch will use patient feedback received as part of this project to inform our work streams and priority planning for the coming year. We will continue to work collaboratively with all system partners across the new Thames Valley ICS during a period of transition.
- For individuals who had concerns about their care or their relative's care, we provided information about feeding back to PALS or how to raise a formal complaint. We signposted to advocacy services where appropriate and offered further listening and support through our Healthwatch hub.
- Healthwatch will continue to ensure that concerns regarding access to Frimley Park hospital, and on-site support for those with additional needs, are raised as part of the engagement process for planning the hospital re-location.

Response to Healthwatch report from head of patient experience, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust:

The trust is grateful for the useful insights into experience of care provided by this report. The themes within the report are in keeping with feedback that we have received through other channels including the national survey programme, our complaints and PALS service and through patient stories.

We know that what matters most to patients and their carers is effective communication, accessible information and services, and a streamlined discharge process. These are areas of ongoing quality improvement. The feedback related to specific services is particularly useful and we have shared this with clinical teams to help their understanding of what works well for patients and their carers, and to consider changes that may improve experience.

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) continues to be a point of contact for patients if they have any concerns or require any assistance.



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