

Delapre Medical Centre

Patient Survey Report

1. Introduction

In October 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Delapre Medical Centre in Northampton as part of a county-wide survey of GP practices. The survey aimed to find out about access to services, the patient experience, good practice and what pressures there are within the practice. A summary report of the findings from the county-wide survey, including good practice and recommendations, is available on our website¹.

We spoke to 10 patients at Delapre Medical Centre about their views, experiences and satisfaction. By speaking to patients face to face we could add depth to the findings of the National GP Patient Survey². We also spoke to the practice manager to find out about services currently being provided, how they are accessed, what they felt worked well and what pressures there were. The questions used are in Appendix 1 and 2.

All information and figures quoted below were correct at the time of the site visit. This report does not reflect any changes or improvements to procedures since that date.

2. Practice information

2.1 Practice size and staffing

Delapre Medical Centre is a medium to large-sized practice (approximately 17,200 patients) with 12 doctors (seven female, five male), seven practice nurses (including two nurse practitioners) and three health care assistants. District nurses, health visitors and midwives are based at the surgery.

The practice operates on two sites - one in Delapre and another in Camp Hill. GP training is carried out with medical students from the University of Leicester Medical School.

2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including minor surgery.

Specialists: The practice employs two counsellors and a community psychiatric nurse from the Community mental Health Team.

¹ www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/about/docs

² <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

Extended opening: The two surgeries do not have extended opening hours.

Home visits: Home visits are carried out having been triaged by the same system as used for appointments, or on the advice of a nurse.

2.3 Appointment booking system

The practice has been operating a new telephone triage system since June 2014.

2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The PPG meets every six to eight weeks with the practice providing a venue and administrative support.

2.5 Complaints system

Information about the complaints system can be found in the waiting area, in the surgery handbook and on the website, including a complaints leaflet. All complaints should be directed to the patient services manager.

3. Patient experience

Note: On the day they visited the two Healthwatch volunteers observed that there was a long queue for the reception desk. They felt it was inappropriate that conversations between reception staff and visitors could be clearly overheard. They also felt there were problems with the attitude of reception staff as they could hear arguments, some clearly indicating delays and mix-ups regarding prescriptions.

3.1 Appointment system

Five of the patients we spoke to found it 'OK' when trying to get an appointment when they needed one, four people found it difficult and one found it very difficult.

- One positive experience of getting an appointment stated that the system worked "as long as the doctor rings to sort out the problem".
- Three people said that it "varies".

Other patients' comments were less positive, for example:

- Three people said they had to wait over two weeks to get an appointment.
- Two people had waited in a telephone queue to find out that there were no appointments left that day.
- One person had not been able to book an appointment in advance with a specific doctor.

3.2 Choice of doctor

Two patients said they usually saw the doctor of their choice. Of the five who said that they did not, three said they would have liked to and two said that it didn't matter to them.

- Three patients said that they would like to see the same doctor for continuity of care.

3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service

Seven people commented and all were either always (two) or usually (five) satisfied with the treatment and service they receive. When asked to tell us more:

- One person said that “GPs and nurses give good service”.
- Another said that they were “Quite happy with the service”.

We asked people what they thought could improve the quality of care. Seven people commented.

- Three people wanted improvements to reception, including greater privacy talking to the receptionist and when handing over specimens (*the Healthwatch Northamptonshire volunteers also considered this to be a problem*).
- Three people would like quicker service for appointment bookings, on the telephone and when waiting at the surgery.
- One person suggested seven day opening, including evenings and weekends.

We also asked people what works well. Three people gave the following answers:

- The online appointment system.
- Having the doctor phone back is convenient.
- Doctors ‘OK’.

3.4 Communication and additional needs

Six of the patients said that there were no problems communicating with staff or doctors, however one person commented:

- “Some receptionists are very abrupt and not helpful”.

We also asked if any of the patients had any additional needs that required support (such as hearing or visual impairment, learning or physical disabilities, English as a second language) and whether their needs were met. One of the patients we spoke to had additional needs which were not being met saying that “the surgery is not wheelchair friendly” (*the Healthwatch Northamptonshire volunteers also considered this to be a problem*).

3.5 Additional comments

We asked patients if they had any other comments to make about the practice. There were no additional comments.

We also asked the Practice Manager if they were any more issues, pressures or examples of good practice that they wanted to tell us about:

Issues/pressures

The practice manager was concerned about how extended hours would work.

What works well?

There are discussions with three other Corby surgeries about opening a health and wellbeing centre. The practice is also working with Northamptonshire Carers to better support carers.

The Practice focuses on care planning using a more proactive approach and is concentrating this year on promoting health checks, e.g. checks for patients aged between 40 and 60 who could be at risk of diabetes, etc.

4. Highlights

According to the results of both our patient survey and the National GP Patient Survey the ease at which patients can make an appointment could be improved. Most patients were either usually or always satisfied with their treatment. There were some issues with communication at reception.

5. Recommendations

1. The practice should look at how to increase the privacy of patients at the reception area and may need to improve receptionist customer training.
2. The practice could look at ways of improving the accessibility for disabled patients.
3. The practice may wish to consider if extended opening hours would benefit the patients and ease pressure on the appointment booking system.
4. We carried out deaf access mystery shopping at five of the 25 practices we visited across the county and have found the access and provisions for deaf and hard of hearing patients could be improved. Whilst we did not specifically assess this practice for deaf awareness and access we recommend that the practice carries out a self-assessment of their deaf access and shares the findings with Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Deafconnect with a view to improving deaf access and awareness.

6. Response from the practice

1. We have looked at ways to improve the privacy for patients in the waiting area and unfortunately without a redesign of the reception area, this is currently not possible. We have put up posters advising patients that should they need to discuss a private or confidential matter, they should inform the reception staff. We do have an office off of the reception area which can be used at any time of the day for this purpose.

With regards receptionist customer training, this is ongoing and is something we do constantly. We use the learning points that come from the regular review of complaints and significant incidents to highlight areas where we can improve and use these as a basis for some of our training sessions.

2. The site at Delapre is a multi-floor building. There is very limited space for the installation of a lift and costs involved are prohibitive. We do have disabled access to consulting and treatment rooms and staff endeavour to ensure patients with limited/reduced mobility are booked in the lower ground floor rooms. The Branch site at Whitefields Surgery has all patient areas on the ground floor and we do advise patients with limited or reduced mobility to use this site; and many do.
3. The practice opens for the 'core' hours of the GP contract. Any additional hours outside this are covered by the Out Of Hours Service, unless practices chose to enter in a contract to open for 'extended' hours. We fully recognise that offering extending hours would be welcomed by our patients, but without adequate funding for this contract, the Partners have opted not to take up this additional contract.
4. Portable Hearing induction loops are available in reception and these can be taken into consultations should the patient request. The patient call system displays a room and patient number for when the patient needs to go to the consulting room and clinical records are flagged to identify those with sight or hearing problems and the clinical staff will collect these patients from the waiting areas in person. We will consider the recommendation to carry out a self-assessment as suggested in the report.

7. Thanks and acknowledgements

Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank the Practice Manager of Delapre Medical Centre for taking the time to talk to us and facilitate our visit, all the patients who were willing to take part in our survey and the Healthwatch Northamptonshire volunteers who visited the practice.

Appendix 1 - Patient survey questions

Q1: How easy is it to get an appointment when you need it? (Please tick one) Very easy Easy OK Difficult Very difficult <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Q2: Please tell us more about your experiences of getting an appointment, including how it is easy or difficult, how long you have to wait to get an appointment, and whether the system works well for you:				
Q3: Do you usually get to see the doctor/nurse/health professional of your choice? Yes No, but I'd like to No, but it doesn't matter to me <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tell us more about how this is important to you or not:				
Q4: Are there any problems when communicating with staff or doctors? Yes No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tell us more:				
Q5: Are you satisfied with the treatment and service you receive here? Yes, always Yes, usually No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tell us more:				
Q6: What do you think could improve the patient experience at your GP practice and what do you think works particularly well? Improvements: Works well:				
Q7: Do you have any additional needs that require support? Such as hearing or visual impairment, learning or physical disabilities, English as a second language, etc. Yes No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
If so, are they met? Yes No Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tell us more:				
Q8: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?				

Appendix 2 - Practice Manager survey questions

<p>Q1: What is the staff makeup of the surgery (+ see briefing)? Do you have any nurse practitioners / prescribers and do you provide a mental health service? E.g. Have there been any changes to the surgery staff since the briefing? What are they? E.g. Which staff provide mental health care and advice?</p>
<p>Q2: Have you any GP or staff vacancies? How long have these posts been vacant?</p>
<p>Q3: How does your appointment booking system work? (only need to ask about what is different to the briefing) <i>E.g. the role of the receptionist, whether there is online booking, how far in advance patients can book appointments, how much choice patients have over time and GP, whether they use an 0845 number, how many phone lines they have, telephone triage? What do you do with temporary or unregistered patients?</i> Have any significant patient criticisms of the appointment system been reported by the PPG and how have these been addressed?</p>
<p>Q4: Does the practice conduct home visits? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> How are these organised?</p>
<p>Q5: What additional facilities does the practice have? (only need to ask about what is different to the briefing) (E.g. specialist clinics, counsellors, blood tests, specialist doctors, dressing changing facilities, drop in sessions) Do you share facilities with any other GP practices in your locality? Or does your practice or GP cluster have any specialisms/clinics or specialist doctors? If so, what and is this working? Would you like to see any more? Is there anything else working well in your locality? Are there any plans for further sharing of resources?</p>
<p>Q6: Does your practice have any extended opening hours or do you plan to (if not mentioned in briefing)? Has this been requested by your PPG?</p>
<p>Q7: Is the 111 Service prominently advertised by the Practice and does the service provide adequately for your patients and for their out of hours requirements? (Also see PPG and Patient Surveys and Reports)</p>
<p>Q8: Do you have an active patient engagement group? How is advertised and how can people join? Is it funded by the practice and how often do they meet? (Other than what is mentioned in the briefing)</p>
<p>Q9: Where is your complaints system publically displayed? <i>E.g. Is it in the patient information leaflet, noticeboard, reception desk?</i> How are complaints dealt with?</p>
<p>Q10. How else do you communicate with patients? <i>E.g. noticeboards, leaflets, website, guidelines about best times to call</i></p>
<p>Q11: What is your equality and diversity policy? How is it implemented? E.g. How provide access for those with physical, visual, hearing, and/or learning disabilities and autism and non-English speakers. BSL/interpreters? Is there staff training or understanding of obligations?</p>
<p>Q12: What other staff training does your practice have? <i>What decision aids/training are receptionists given?</i></p>
<p>Q13. Are there more patients attending your practice than there used to be? Have you any thoughts on why that is or why there is pressure on GP practices?</p>
<p>Q14: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about? E.g. things that are working well, challenges the practice faces, additional support needs they have, thoughts about A&E attendance, etc.</p>