

The Lakeside Surgery Patient Survey Report

1. Introduction

In November 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited The Lakeside Surgery in Corby 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 ten patients at Lakeside 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

The Lakeside Surgery is a large practice (approximately 48,300 patients) with 23 partners, three salaried GPs (one currently training in mental health), five nurse practitioners (including four nurse prescribers), eight practice nurses and five HCAs across three sites (Lakeside, Forest Gate and Brigstock), plus a counsellor, osteopath, podiatrist, and midwives.

2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a large number of services, including a range of clinics, plus immunisations and minor surgery.

Specialists: The practice employs specialists in Gynaecology, occupational health, Dermatology, mental health, Diabetes, drugs misuse and heart failure.

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

² <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

Shared services: No services based at the practice were mentioned as being shared with other surgeries.

Extended opening: The Lakeside site is open late from 6.30pm to 8pm on Mondays and Thursdays. Health monitoring clinics are held on Saturdays in Spring, and Flu clinics on Saturday mornings in the Autumn.

Home visits: All GPs and registrars carry out home visits daily.

2.3 Appointment booking system

Appointments can be booked in person, by phone or online (GP appointments only), and patients can book up to four weeks in advance. There is a telephone triage system where patients can talk to GPs and nurses, and the SystmOnline app is available for people with smartphones. Also a Same-Day Clinic is staffed by two GPs for urgent appointments and a Minor Illness Clinic by nurses. Temporary or non-resident paperwork is kept at the front desk so that people can be seen as quickly as possible.

2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The PPG meets monthly and is advertised on notice boards within the surgery and on the website. It is included and considered in practice decisions.

2.5 Complaints system

The complaints policy is displayed in all waiting areas and on the website, and information about the process and how to access it is stated in the practice leaflet. A complaints manager deals with all complaints which are also monitored, reviewed and discussed at practice meetings.

2.6 Equality and Diversity

We asked the practice about their equality and diversity policy and how the practice met additional needs of patients. The following were mentioned:

- Full disabled access at all sites and lifts at two larger sites.
- Interpreters always available when requested.
- Letters sent to involve carer or next of kin of people with learning disabilities.

3. Patient experience

3.1 Appointment system

Half of the patients we spoke to found it easy (one) or very easy (four) to get an appointment when they needed one, and two patients described the system as 'OK'. Two patients said that it was difficult (one) or very difficult (one) to make an appointment.

- Five patients said that they had not experienced any problems.

- One patient commented that “the service is excellent, patients are even told how many patients before them when they ring for appointment”.
- One patient said that they had had a bad experience and had not been able to see a doctor for two weeks.
- One patient said that the system did not seem to work after they had an appointment cancelled and had considerable difficulty in booking another.

3.2 Choice of doctor

Most of the patients said that they did not usually get to see the doctor of their choice (six) but did not think this mattered. Four people said they were usually able to see their preferred doctor.

- Three patients said that seeing different doctors did not present problems.
- Two patients did not mind providing the doctor had the relevant specialisation.
- One patient said it was “very important” to them to see their preferred doctor.
- One patient said that they could see the doctor they wished to, providing they were able to wait.

3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service

All the patients we spoke to were usually (two) or always (eight) satisfied with the treatment and service they received. When asked to tell us more:

- Four patients described the service as “excellent”.
- One patient said “A lovely peaceful place, a relaxed feeling here, everyone is very kind. A truly excellent service”.
- However another said “Depending on the doctor! Do not always appear aware of my condition. In a ‘hurry’ to get you out”.

We asked people what they thought could improve the quality of care. All ten people commented:

- Eight patients thought that nothing needed doing to improve the service.
- One patient would like it to be easier to see their ‘own’ doctor.
- One patient said that there should be better appointment availability.
- One patient was concerned that some doctors did not always put the patient’s wishes first.
- One patient thought more car parking would be helpful.

We also asked people what works well. Two people said that ‘everything’ works well.

3.4 Communication and additional needs

Most of the patients (eight) we spoke to said that they had no problems communicating with doctors or staff. Two people said they did:

- One patient commented that although the nurses were fine, doctors could be difficult.

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 said that they had additional needs and that these were being met.

3.5 Additional comments

We asked patients if they had any other comments to make about the practice. There were seven additional positive comments and one additional negative comment.

Positive:

- Four people reiterated that the surgery was “excellent”.
- “Everything is wonderful and everyone is so kind”.
- “Quite happy with practice”.
- “This is the best practice in Corby, meeting all my needs”.

Negative:

One person commented “Easier doctor’s appointments. More sensitive receptionists, not posing as doctors!”.

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

One concern was the rapid expansion of Corby and the resulting demand on GP numbers.

4. Highlights

According to the results of both our patient survey and the National GP Patient Survey the practice’s appointment booking system usually worked okay and efficiently and most of the patients found it easy or okay to get an appointment when they needed one. Many patients were also always satisfied with the care and treatment they received from doctors. The one person who told us they had additional needs said they were met.

5. Recommendations

1. Look at ways to improve the appointment booking system and ability to see a doctor of choice.

2. We carried out deaf access mystery shopping at 5 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

Since the report was written the following changes relating to the above recommendations have taken place.

Changes to booking system:

- New texting service introduced confirming appointments made with the ability for patients to respond and cancel appointments - this has reduced the DNA numbers.
- Larger reception team to take calls.
- New WebGP introduced where patients can answer questions on our website which creates a medical report - a GP then reviews this the same day and responds accordingly, e.g. a telephone call direct, called to make an appointment, etc.
- More “on the day” appointments available for GPs rather than being open to be booked in advance.

Deaf awareness:

- Managers, reception team leaders and reception staff attended a deaf awareness training.
- A manager reviewed the procedures relating to patients with hearing difficulties.

7. Thanks and acknowledgements

Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank the Practice Manager of the Lakeside Surgery 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, <i>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:</i>				
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?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>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>