

Woodsend Medical Centre Patient Survey Report

1. Introduction

In October 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Woodsend Medical Centre in Corby as part of a countywide 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 six patients at Woodsend 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

Woodsend Medical Centre is an average-sized practice (approximately 9,000 patients) with eight doctors (four partners and four registrars), four practice nurses and two health care assistants. There are currently no vacancies.

2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including clinics for Diabetes and Asthma management; heart disease; maternity care; child health; aural toilette (suction for more stubborn ear wax); smoking cessation; weight management; blood pressure monitoring; wellbeing; contraception; minor surgery including vasectomy; and a community skin clinic.

Specialists: The practice does not employ any additional specialists.

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

² <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

Shared services: Some services are shared: patients go to Willowbrook for phlebotomy as there is a Pathology Laboratory situated there. The Community Skin Clinic is for any Corby patients.

Extended opening: Late night on Mondays once a month and every second Wednesday from 7am.

Home visits: Requests for a home visit are usually received on the morning, triaged by the on-call doctor and visits are carried out between 12 noon and 2pm. Long term or palliative care patients are seen by their own GP. The on-call doctor will respond to any emergency calls throughout the day and patients are also able to make a telephone call to ask a doctor for advice.

2.3 Appointment booking system

Appointments may be booked online, by telephone (patients ring in for ‘on the day’ appointments - there are six telephone lines), or in person. Some appointments are booked in advance. A recent patient survey suggested that telephone access should be promoted. An additional member of staff is to be employed to improve the length of time it takes to answer the phone on a Monday morning.

Missed appointments

Text reminders are sent about appointments and test results. Patients receive proactive phone calls to remind them about clinics.

2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)

There is an active patient group meeting bi-monthly and they produce a newsletter. The chair meets with the chairs of three other practices and they are discussing co-operative working. The group regularly review the appointment booking system audit trail due to the pressure on the phone lines on a Monday morning.

2.5 Complaints system

Information is available on the web site and in the waiting room - plus there is a downloadable complaints form. Complaints in person are received initially by the reception manager and passed on as appropriate. Patients are offered the opportunity to discuss their complaints or concerns with the relevant person. Letters of explanation and apology are written where appropriate. More serious complaints are escalated using arbitration advice from the Clinical Commissioning Group and ultimately, where appropriate, to the Ombudsman.

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:

- Wheelchair access is good - a lift for upstairs appointments
- Slope access at entrance to surgery

- Disabled parking
- Services for the deaf and blind
- Interpreter service (Approximately 5% of patients are Eastern Europeans)
- A dedicated phone service for emergencies

3. Patient experience

3.1 Appointment system

Most patients we spoke to found it easy (four) to book an appointment when they needed one. One person found it 'OK' and another very difficult.

Most positive or satisfactory experiences of getting an appointment mentioned the booking system. For example:

- Two patients said it was easy to phone up although there can be a queue.
- One patient mentioned the ease of the online system for booking routine appointments and repeat prescriptions.

The patient who found it very difficult cited the long telephone queues and inability to book in advance. Another person said that since practices merged it was harder to get appointments.

- Two patients mentioned their inability to make an urgent appointment after 9am.

3.2 Choice of doctor

Most patients said they were usually able to see the doctor of their choice. One person was not and would have liked to.

- Two patients thought this was important because of knowledge of medical history.
- One patient was happy to see anyone.

3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service

All five of the patients that responded said they were always satisfied with the treatment and service they received. When asked to tell us more:

- One patient said that they had chosen to go to Woodsend because of their good reputation.
- Another patient said that they did not have to wait too often or for too long for appointments.

We asked people what they thought could improve the quality of care. Three people raised issues around the appointments system:

- More people answering the phones for appointment booking.
- Drop-in service rather than pre-booked urgent appointments.

- The appointment system in general.

In addition:

- One patient would like drinking water and informative literature/magazines available in the waiting areas.
- Another patient would like a quicker turn-around on blood test results.
- One would rather see a fully qualified doctor than trainees.

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

- Appointment booking system (ability to book online or by phone).
- Extended opening hours and appointment availability.
- Doctors explain things well and follow through with treatment.
- There is good support for looked after children/children in care.

3.4 Communication and additional needs

None of the patients we spoke to have had difficulty in communicating with staff or doctors.

- One patient said that they were “happy with the reception staff”.
- One patient described the staff as “very 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. None of the patients we spoke to had additional needs.

3.5 Additional comments

We asked patients if they had any other comments to make about the practice. There were no additional positive comments and one additional negative comment.

Negative:

One person had a problem with x-rays going missing and having to make several visits to get a diagnosis. They also praised the emergency care centre in Corby.

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

Increasing patient numbers and diversity is an issue.

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 practice's appointment booking system works well. Most patients were able to get an appointment when they needed it, although issues were raised about the long phone queues. Most patients were able to see the doctor of their choice and all five patients who had previously been treated at the surgery were satisfied with the treatment and care they received. No issues of communication were reported. The practice seems to have a good reputation and scored above the national average for all areas of the most recent National GP Patient Survey.

5. Recommendations

1. Employing more admin staff or adding more phone lines could improve the wait on the phones that some patients experience.
2. Look at ways to increase the availability of urgent on the day appointments whilst still enabling patients to book appointments in advance. Perhaps an additional drop-in service could be considered.
3. The practice could incorporate more often extended opening hours, such as having the extra hours on Mondays every week instead of once a month.
4. 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. Thanks and acknowledgements

Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank the Practice Manager and PPG group chair of Woodsend 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

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|--|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 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: | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | |
| 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

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| <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? <i>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?</i></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? (<i>only need to ask about what is different to the briefing</i>) <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? (<i>only need to ask about what is different to the briefing</i>) (<i>E.g. specialist clinics, counsellors, blood tests, specialist doctors, dressing changing facilities, drop in sessions</i>) 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 (<i>if not mentioned in briefing</i>)? 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? (<i>Also see PPG and Patient Surveys and Reports</i>)</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? (<i>Other than what is mentioned in the briefing</i>)</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? <i>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?</i></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? <i>E.g. things that are working well, challenges the practice faces, additional support needs they have, thoughts about A&E attendance, etc.</i></p> |