

## Enter and View Visit

### Hampton Wick Surgery

Hampton Wick Surgery, 1-3 Upper Teddington Rd, Kingston upon Thames, Greater London KT1 4DL

**Visit dates:** September 28th and 30th

**Visitors:** Penny Alexander, Jan Marriott, Liz Grove

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## Introduction

Hampton Wick Surgery is located in Hampton Wick and has a total of 9500 patients registered. The practice has one practice manager, nine doctors, two healthcare assistants, two practice nurses, and a team of medical administrators.

The visits to Hampton Wick Surgery took place on the afternoons of the 28th and 30th September 2015. We spoke to patients, staff and the Patient Participation Group about their experiences of the practice

## Overall Findings

Overall, patients were very satisfied with the service that the practice provides.

Most of the patients we spoke to said that they would recommend the practice; one patient stated that they have a *“very personal and professional service”*. Patients were very positive about the practice stating that it was *“convenient”*, *“easy to access”*, *“the staff are polite and helpful”* and that the *“quality of care is equivalent to that of a private setting”*. Others complimented the staff, asserting that the staff and doctors were the best thing about the practice.

There are significant problems with making contact with the practice by phone. These problems were expressed by patients and staff and witnessed by our visitors during the visit and our staff when booking the visit.

The practice environment was generally very good, clean and pleasant. We felt that more could be done to help patients to access information. Patients with small children told us that they find it inconvenient that they cannot bring buggies into the practice.

Most patients told us that they were happy with the overall care and treatment that the practice provided, and that they understood the treatments or referrals offered, saying *“I fully understand advice which is carefully given in a consultative way”*. Other patients said that they felt happy asking for a better explanation if they did not understand what they were told.

## Appointments

### Booking Appointments

Patient's experiences of booking appointments was mixed. Some found the experience "quite good" or "very good" however the most patients that we spoke to told us that the experience was negative due to problems contacting the surgery by phone.

A couple of patients stated that they had difficulties with getting early morning or late evening appointments. Several patients had booked their appointments a long time in advance, as this was the only way to ensure they got the appointment time they wanted.

A few patients commented that booking appointments was easier if it didn't matter what GP they saw, however one patient stated that in order to see a female GP they had to wait 1-2 weeks. It was generally agreed that "booking a GP of your choice can take longer, but all GP's here seem to be excellent". Another stated that they "had to wait a long time - as always" to get an appointment.

### Phones

We found contacting the surgery by phone to arrange the visit to be challenging as the phone frequently rang for a long period of time and was not always answered.

During the visit we observed that the practice phone was frequently left to ring unanswered whilst reception staff juggled the ringing phone with a steady stream of patients waiting to be seen at the desk. Our visitors remarked positively about that work of reception staff in attempting to manage demand but noted that the demand exceeded their capacity.

Patients told us that their experience of booking appointments was "not great - you often have to wait a long time, both for the phone to be answered and for an appointment". Some patients commented on the difficulty of booking appointments over the phone, despite this being the preferred method of booking appointments for most patients.

One patient stated that they had made three attempts to reach the practice and each time they were placed in a long queue to speak to the receptionist. Other patients said they would try contacting the practice by phone twice before visiting in person to book an appointment and that even with the new call waiting system it can take a long time to speak to someone. Patients did tell us however that their enquiries were dealt with satisfactorily when they did speak to someone.

The PPG has noted that a major issue with the practice is that the phones often ring unanswered.

Front line and management staff told our visitors that there were not satisfied with the time that people had to wait to get through by phone. One member of staff said that there were not sufficient staff on reception to cope with demand.

### RECOMENDATION

We told the practice that the telephone booking system is not managing the volume of calls to the practice and that they should take steps to alleviate this pressure and to monitor performance. It would be useful to monitor the average waiting time for calls and the percentage of incoming calls that are complete or incomplete as performance measures.

## OUTCOME

The Practice acknowledged the problem and noted that they are already working to fix it, they told us:

*“Earlier this year we sought to replace our existing telephone system in order to improve patient experience.*

*We have experienced some teething problems with the new system, and we are constantly monitoring the service. We are aware that significant waits on the phone remain commonplace, and in part this is due to staff shortages, and despite being on a constant recruitment drive during the past seven months, we continue the search to find a further three staff members required to complete the team.*

*We remain very disappointed that we have not been able to resolve these issues in a timely way and continue to strive to improve telephone access”*

## Online Booking

One patient told us that they used the online system successfully to book their appointment.

Two patients reported having problems with the online booking system, one stated it was too restricted and they *“couldn’t choose any doctor or time”* another said that the *“the complexity of passwords and usernames made it unattractive”* or they *“found online too difficult”* so they now book over the phone.

We did not observe any promotion of the online booking service. Some patients were not aware that the surgery had online booking, and stated that *“online booking would be quicker”*. Others said that were unlikely to use it as they *“prefer to speak to somebody”*.

The practice had posters promoting online booking during the first half of the year and it is promoted on the front page of the Surgery Website.

## RECOMENDATION

We recommended that the practice better promote the online booking system and support people to use it, to reduce the demand on the telephone booking.

## OUTCOME

The practice told us *“We take on board your observations regarding online booking... we will take steps to advertise this feature more widely within the practice and look to include an article in the PPG Newsletter.”*

## Out of Hours

Not all patients were aware of what services are available out of hour’s service.

Several patients said that they had used another service, such as the walk in clinic or A&E, when they could not get an appointment. Some stated that they only used these services out of hours, or for urgent care for children.

## Quality of Care

### Staff

Overall, patients found the staff to be polite, helpful, efficient, friendly and responsive. One patient stated that they were *“Very friendly and efficient, they dealt with us quickly”*.

Communication between staff members was generally perceived positively. However one patient said that there were difficulties when reception staff needed to speak to a doctor or when urgent information was needed regarding their medication and prescriptions. The PPG have also identified that repeat prescriptions are an issue at the practice, and it was identified by staff that a better skill mix, such as working more closely with pharmacists, could benefit the practice.

### Reception staff

Reception staff were seen by the majority of patients as polite and helpful, *“Generally very warm and approachable or at very least efficient and professional”*. One patient found the reception staff had poor eye contact and felt they were unfriendly. We observed that the two reception staff were very busy throughout our visits, dealing with patient enquiries and complex issues, as well as the constantly ringing telephone. This was something that the reception staff themselves acknowledged to be a challenge with their role, and we observed the waiting times to speak to reception increase when there was a complex patient enquiry to be dealt with.

### Nurses/other clinicians

Nurses were viewed very well, patients commented that they were *“really friendly, caring and kind”*, *“professional and warm”* and *“professional and respectful”*.

### Doctors

Patients had a lot of positive comments to make about the doctors, stating that they were *“fantastic”* and that they listen. The quality of care from the doctor was rated very highly by patients, who broadly said that they were *“excellent”* and that they were satisfied with the care received at the practice. One patient said that *“Dr Moore and Dr O’Flynn are excellent”*.

Several patients felt that it was important to be able to see the same doctor, for continuity of care, however they acknowledged that seeing the same doctor was not always possible and there was a recognition that they often had to wait longer to see their doctor of choice.

One patient expressed their distress at the lack of support offered by the GP during a stressful diagnosis period, and said they would’ve appreciated support to help with their fears and anxiety.

### GP Hub

Hampton Wick is a site for the General Practice Hub pilot and so receives patients from other practices who need a same day, extended hours or weekend appointments. Hub patients told us that they had a positive experience: they booked their appointments over the phone with their own practice, were given an appointment on the day they rang and they found Hampton Wick an easy practice to access.

### Complaints

There is information on how to make a complaint in the practice leaflet, and a comments box is left in reception. Staff stated that they try and settle complaints at reception if possible, but if not they refer complaints to the practice manager. Complaints are entered onto the patient's notes so the doctors are made aware.

## Patient Involvement

### Patient Participation Group

We spoke to a representative of the Patient Participation Group (PPG) at the practice. This is a group of between 5 and 8 patients who meet quarterly. There is a concern among PPG members that, whilst a reasonably diverse group, it does not represent the diversity of users of the practice. The PPG told us that they find engaging with patients and promoting itself through the practice to be challenging. The PPG had completed a Confidentiality and Privacy Observational study which enabled them to engage with the practice. Practice staff described this as *“very valuable”* and told us that they had *“used the learning from this to help us redesign the immediate area around the reception desk to improve patient flows and protect confidentiality”*.

Some members of staff were not able to explain how patients could join the PPG. The practice told us that this was because they were very new to the practice.

We observed that there were no signs in the practice to encourage new members to the PPG, although the PPG newsletter was on display and the PPG is promoted to new patients via the practice leaflet.

Interviews with staff and the PPG identified some tension surrounding this relationship. Some staff were very receptive to the PPG, believing the practice to have a very active group and seeing this as a good opportunity to make changes and improvements to the practice.

The practice partners were receptive to the PPG and receive feedback in a positive way. They told us that *“As Senior Partner, I regard the efforts of our PPG to be invaluable with regards to our ongoing service improvement.”*

### RECOMMENDATION

We welcome the value that the practice place on their PPG.

We asked the practice to take a more proactive approach in supporting and promoting the group as well as enabling them to engage more freely with patients. The practice told us that *“We along with the PPG were very proactive in recruiting new members to the PPG group, and we would like to widen membership, but I am wary about increasing the size of the group so much that it becomes ungainly”*

We understand the importance of a committee's size but note that there is some scope to develop this before it becomes unwieldy. There may also be other opportunities for people to participate in and support their PPG perhaps through providing insight or by acting as volunteers.

## Physical Environment

### Overall environment

We found the overall environment to be clean and well-lit however it was observed that there wasn't adequate lighting around the entrance after dark, making it very difficult to see when entering or leaving the surgery. We observed during the evening visit that the waiting areas had been left untidy from earlier appointments during the day.

We were informed that there are plans to improve the pedestrian access and safety at the front of the building *"...our immediate concerns are the repairs and alterations we have scheduled to increase patient safety when accessing the practice premises and grounds. The Practice Manager has been in consultation with the local council and as a result it has been agreed that a traffic controlled pedestrian crossing is to be installed immediately in front of the building. We have also submitted a bid for funding to enable us to improve the sight line for pedestrians and cars accessing the premises, it is proposed we will widen one of the entrances and install a clear pedestrian pathway to the front entrance."*

### Access

We observed a buggy and bike park outside the practice. Patients with babies said that they are not allowed to bring buggies into the practice but were not clear of the reasons behind this. Patients with babies found this inconvenient, especially if they had to wake up or carry children who were unable to walk, and expressed this sentiment strongly.

The practice acknowledged that this is unpopular but told us that they do not allow buggies into the practice as they bring in dirt on their wheels and that the decision to ban buggies from the building was taken to control the risk of infection from this.

We also observed that the front doors to the practice, whilst they allow for wheelchair access, are not automatic which would present difficulties for unaccompanied wheelchair users trying to access the practice. The practice told us *"We do have continuing maintenance and improvement schedule for the premises, and although we do not currently have an automatic opening inner door (which is kept open during the warmer weather), patients can ring the low level reception bell if they require assistance to access the building. We have not had any direct patient complaints or requests to date, but will review the needs regularly."*

### Information

Most patients said that they had not needed any information however one person told us that they would have benefited from further support but felt this was lacking from the practice.

We found there was lack of a variety of information available in leaflets or posters promoting services outside the practice. The practice has a locked display board and a magazine rack, but there was very little information to aid patients to find sources of support.

The PPG commented that they have found it difficult to communicate with patients, to display their newsletters and to collect responses to their surveys.

There was very little information available about clinical staff, opening times or out of hour's arrangements although this was detailed in the practice leaflet. We observed that

staff did not wear name badges. The signs for the toilets and fire exits were clear and well-marked.

### RECOMMENDATION

We recommend the practice review the provision of information available to patients and consider improving the way that patients are signposted to local support such as voluntary organisations.

As a hub practice it is increasingly important for patients who are not familiar with the surgery to be able to identify staff members when they come for appointments. Practice staff should wear name badges and more information should be available within the practice about the staff. The practice told us that they are investigating this.

It will also be important to monitor the access of the practice as the hub may create changing demands. Once the new pathway has been installed the practice may wish to consider whether this would reduce the impact of allowing buggies back into the practice.