

**Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership  
Enter & View Report**

<b>Service</b>	Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership
<b>Address</b>	141 Brigstock Road, Thornton Heath,
<b>Manager</b>	Rebecca Malik
<b>Date and time of visit</b>	Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> December at 10.45am
<b>Status of visit</b>	Announced
<b>Healthwatch Croydon Enter &amp; View team - Authorised Representatives</b>	Annamika Koomoshan, Anne Milstead
<b>Lead Authorised Representative</b>	Annamika Koomoshan
<b>Healthwatch Croydon contact details</b>	Healthwatch Croydon, 24 George Street, Croydon, CR0 1PB

**Reason:** Healthwatch Croydon trends analysis report showed a high number of people have had problems with booking appointments.

**Acknowledgements:** Healthwatch Croydon would like to thank Rebecca Malik and Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership staff patients and carers for their co-operation during the visit.

**Purpose of the visit:** The Health and Social Care Act allows Healthwatch Croydon representatives to observe service delivery and to talk to service users, their families and relatives on premises such as hospitals, residential care homes, GP Practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. The visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service, but equally, they can take place when services have a good reputation. We can therefore learn from shared examples of what they are doing well from the perspective of the people who experience the service first hand.

On this occasion, 2 Authorised Representatives (including a Healthwatch staff member) carried out observations and engaged with patients, carers and staff. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations on areas for improvement if required. Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policy. If at any time an Authorised Representative observes a potential safeguarding concern, they will inform their lead and service manager. The lead Authorised Representative will then end the visit. In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to Croydon Council’s Safeguarding Team.

### About the service

Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership merged in 2007 with a combined list of 17,000 patients. It is now a training practice for GPs and physicians. Two years ago the ‘Doctors First’ appointment system was implemented to improve the service. Providing a telephone consultation the system has resulted in a third of the patients being seen face to face it allows direct access to a GP, a GP partner commented “This has made it more efficient.”

### Observations

Staff were observed dealing with patients in a friendly and professional manner. Within the Reception and Waiting area there was a hand sanitiser for patients to use on arrival or exit. Patients logged in their appointment via the IT system which was available in different languages. Information was displayed on a wide selection of topics including:

- Flu vaccination
- Independent Age
- Advice Service Croydon
- Flu vaccination
- Antibiotics
- British Sign Language Interpreter Service
- NHS Friends and Family Test
- Investors In People Award
- Free confidential HIV testing

### Feedback from patients

	Topic	Response
1	Booking appointments	The aim was to obtain patients’ experiences in booking appointments. The majority of patients had booked their appointment using the Doctors First telephone system. Only one patient had come into the Practice to make an appointment and was allocated an appointment 2 days later.
2	Telephone system	The aim was to obtain patients’ experiences about the Practice telephone system. The Doctors First appointment system was set up to support patients in accessing a brief GP consultation before an appointment is allocated. The overall aim was to reduce the number of patients coming in for unnecessary appointments, therefore freeing spaces for more urgent appointments. The process is that Reception staff answer the phone calls and take details for the GPs to contact patients. A few patients commented they waited a long time in the telephone queue. The majority of patients were happy with the system and said it’s easier to contact the Practice and one patient commented “It’s much better now with the new telephone system.”
3	Allocation of appointments	The aim was to find out how long patients waited for an appointment. Most of the patients had called in the morning and within 30 mins they received a call back from the GP. The majority of patients were given an appointment the same day. Only one patient had waited 4 days to obtain an appointment.

	Topic	Response
4	Waiting time within the practise	The aim was to find out how long patients waited for their appointment. The general consensus was that patients wait between 5-10 minutes to be seen. During the visit one patient was waiting over 15 minutes for the GP to prescribe medication.
5	Feedback on treatment received	The aim was to find out whether patients were satisfied with the treatment they receive. Overall, the feedback was positive from patients and one individual commented "I am happy with the treatment, apart from the wait."
6	Staff interaction with patients	The aim was to gain feedback on patients' experiences with staff at the Practice. All patients commented that they felt staff listened to them.
7	Complaints procedure	The aim was to establish how the Practice informs patients of the procedure and process for making a complaint. None of the patients were aware of the complaints procedure. The Complaints procedure was not displayed within the waiting area.
8	Feedback comments and suggestion	The aim was to see whether patients were able to feedback their comments and suggestions. One patient commented "I leave feedback at reception and online." The majority of patients were unaware of how to feedback their comments or suggestions
9	Patient Participation Group	The aim was to see whether the Practice had an active Patient Participation Group and how patients got involved. Patients were not aware of the Patient Participation Group, the purpose of the group or how to get involved.
10	Other comments by patients	A patient commented "They are given sufficient time with the GP."

## Feedback from staff

	Topic	Response
1	Positive aspects of the role	The aim was to give staff an opportunity to feedback the positive aspects of their role. One member of staff commented "The job keeps you on your toes, you are never bored."
2	Challenges and difficulties	The aim was to establish if staff encounter any challenges within their job. Staff commented that the job is demanding and the Reception staff deal with the backlash from patients regarding their appointments. "If we cannot offer an appointment the same day we ask patients to call back the following day."
3	Improvement and suggestions	The aim was to find out if staff are able to make any suggestions. Staff commented that they are able to feed back their ideas, management are very approachable.
4	Training and development	The aim was to establish whether staff are offered training and development. Staff commented that they are encouraged to take up training and development opportunities. Informal training is also undertaken in partnership with other Practices for example dementia training. Some staff are also training in dual roles such as Reception and Administration. As a result of this, the Practice has obtained Investors In People Accreditation.
5	Support from Management	The aim was to establish if staff are supported by their Manager. Staff commented that they feel supported by their Manager and the partners and they feel confident in raising any issues.
6	Appointment system	The aim was to establish the appointment system. Staff commented that "Patients are put on the call list for a GP to call back and arrange an appointment."
7	Telephone system	The aim was to establish how easy it is for patients to contact the Doctors First telephone system. Staff commented "The telephone system can be tricky to call through for an appointment. If patients try again later they do get through for an appointment. From 8am four members of staff cover the calls."
8	Complaints	The aim was to establish how the Practice deals with complaints. A member of staff commented "Complaints go straight through to the Reception Manager and patients are advised to put formal complaints in writing to the Practice Manager."
9	Patient Participation Group	The aim was to find out how patients are involved in the Patient Participation Group. Management were aware of the group but a member of staff was unaware of the purpose of the Patient Participation Group and how patients are involved.

## Feedback from Management

	Topic	Response
1	Positive areas	<p>The aim was to establish what staff thought was working well for the Practice. Management commented “We offer a comprehensive selection of services. The Practice has experienced Practice nurses who manage long term conditions. The pharmacy reviews medications and there is a quick turnaround time on issuing prescriptions.</p> <p><b>Staff development</b></p> <p>We invest in all our staff, the Health Care Assistants are trained to do ECG’ and immunisation. It’s a training Practice for GPs and physicians.” Overall, staff felt was a nice place to work.</p> <p>“Overall, the ‘Doctors First’ system works well for most patients.” In addition, extended hours appointments are available during the evening on a Tuesday and Wednesday between 6:30pm - 7:30pm. Evening appointments with nurses are available three a week until 8pm.</p> <p>Another area that has worked well was that the Practice sent text messages to patients about the flu vaccination. This resulted in an improvement in the uptake of the vaccination.</p>
2	Changes and improvements	<p>The aim was to give staff and management an opportunity to elaborate on any changes or improvements. Management commented that the introduction of the Doctors First appointment system 2 years ago has made the Practice more efficient. Those patients who require an immediate appointment are allocated an appointment quicker.</p> <p>Future development is that the Practice is having a lift installed for patients to access the rooms upstairs.</p>
3	Challenges and difficulties	<p>The aim was to establish the main challenges and difficulties the Practice encounters. Management stated the main challenge is the struggle to recruit GPs within Croydon and the Practice is short by 2 full time Doctors.</p> <p>Other challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ‘Doctors First’ system is sometimes a problem for people who are working and they may find it difficult to speak to a GP whilst at work. To resolve this problem, Reception staff ask patients for a convenient time for the GP to call back.</li> <li>• Staff explained that “Not enough patients are using the online booking service. Patients are encouraged to access the online booking system and they can also book an appointment with a Nurse using this system.”</li> <li>• Since the two Practices merged there have been minor problems with some patients who travel from South Norwood, however the situation is improving.</li> </ul>

	Topic	Response
4	Suggestions on future improvement	<p>The aim was to give staff and management an opportunity to share their ideas. Feedback from Management was “More capacity would be helpful. There is a huge shortage of GPs within the borough.”</p> <p>To implement a system for patients to cancel appointments. “A text message system would be helpful for patients to cancel their appointment by text. Staff could check whether this service is available on the current system.”</p>
5	Feedback and suggestions from staff	The aim was to identify how staff feedback their ideas. Staff are able to feed back any ideas to management and they are also able to do this within team meetings.
6	Training and development	The aim was to establish what training and development opportunities are offered to staff. Management explained that “All members of staff are proactive in undertaking training and development.” Staff are also encouraged to progress in career development. Staff undertake regular reviews and appraisals and are kept up to date on all training courses. The Practice has obtained Investors In People accreditation.
7	Staffing levels	The aim was to find out if staff levels are adequate. The Practice currently has GP vacancies which they are struggling to fill due to GP shortages. The Reception Department would ideally like another member of staff to cover Reception duties. This issue has been forwarded to Management to decide.
8	Appointment system	The aim was to establish the appointment system. The calls come through the Doctors First Appointment system. Reception take the contact details of the patients and the GPs call the patients back; nurses ‘appointments are bookable in advance.
9	Compliments and complaints	The aim was to establish how the Practice deals with compliments and complaints. Management explained that some complaints had been received regarding the appointment system, all complaints are responded to. Staff do get lots of compliments directly from patients but not in writing.
10	Patient Participation Group	<p>The aim was to find out how patients are involved in the Patient Participation Group. The Practice has a Patient Participation Group, but are struggling to engage with patients from a diverse background. Ideally “We want more patients to be involved. Roughly 3 to 4 people turn up regularly.”</p> <p>Staff have collected emails and advertised the groups with a poster. The Practice Manager and a partner are always present at the meetings with regular themes. The GPs and nurse have done a talk on different themes</p>

## Conclusion

The implementation of the Doctors First telephone system has improved patient’s access to appointments. Overall, positive feedback was received from patients regarding the appointment booking system and interaction from staff. Internally, the overall impression is that the Practice invests in supporting staff in training and development, which is evident from the Investors In People accreditation. Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership will be performing well if Healthwatch Croydon recommendations are put into action.

## Positives

- All the patients the Authorised Representatives spoke to were happy with the treatment they receive
- All patients felt they were listened to by staff
- The majority of patients said it was relatively easy to book an appointment, depending on the time they called
- Patients said they called in the morning and received an appointment the same day
- The Practice is starting to encourage patients to book online
- Evening appointments are available on a Tuesday and Wednesday
- Patients are encouraged to put their official complaints to the Practice Manager and the nurses deal with their own informal complaints
- Admin and Reception staff are able to learn and work in both areas
- Some Admin and Reception staff have trained to be become Health Care Assistants □  
Staff felt supported by Management
- Obtained Investors In People - staff are offered a variety of training and development opportunities
- Staff are able to update their website internally

## Recommendations

- Clearly display the complaints procedure

**Recommendation:** To have the Complaints Procedure clearly displayed within the Reception area.

- Patients were not aware on how to feedback comments or suggestions.

**Recommendation:** Display information on how patients can feed back their comments or suggestions.

- Patients are not accessing the online booking system.

**Recommendation:** Promote the online booking system via different methods firstly by placing a poster at the entrance, send notifications via the text message system, newsletter and website. These methods will then reduce the number of people calling through to book appointments and the number of complaints about booking appointments.

- Patients were not aware of the Patient Participation Group.

**Recommendation:** As the GP Practice is struggling with recruiting a more diverse range of patients for their Patient Participation Group. Suggested ways of promoting the group could be via a poster displayed within Reception with details of the meetings dates. Information could also be included within the newsletter and website.

## Disclaimer

*This report is a representative sample of the views of the outpatients, carers and staff that Healthwatch Croydon spoke to within this timeframe and does not represent the views of all the outpatients, carers and staff at Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership. The observations made in this report only relate to the visit carried out at Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership on Thursday 10th December from 11:15am to 1:30pm.*

**Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership confirmed they were satisfied with the report and have actioned the recommendations that were highlighted.**