

# Healthwatch Greenwich Enter and View report

**GP practice:** Ferryview Health Centre

**Date:** Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016, 9:30am-12:00pm

**Authorised representatives:** Jade Landers and Mike Thomas

## Background

Healthwatch Greenwich is the local community champion for health and social care. As part of the national Healthwatch network we explore the patient and public experience of health and social care services in order to influence and improve the design and delivery of services. One of the ways in which local Healthwatch do this, is through our Enter & View programme.

Authorised Healthwatch Greenwich representatives can carry out visits to health and social care services to observe how they are being run and to talk to patients, service users, their families and carers about their experiences.

Healthwatch Greenwich uses feedback from the local community to decide on priorities for our work. Access to GP services was identified as an issue for local people and was selected as one of the Healthwatch Greenwich priorities for 2015/2016. As part of this work, Healthwatch Greenwich are conducting a series of Enter and View visits to GP practices across the borough to speak to patients and gather their views.

## Aims

- To gather feedback from patients about their experiences of using their GP practice.
- To observe the general day-to-day running of the surgery.
- To highlight examples of good practice.

## Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View visit and a copy of the prompt sheet had been sent to the Practice Manager prior to the visit. Upon arrival, the Healthwatch Greenwich Enter and View authorised representatives met with Rok Zihlerl, the Practice Manager, for a short and informal introductory meeting where he explained the rationale behind the new 'walk in and wait' appointment system.

The Healthwatch Greenwich representatives then approached patients in the waiting room to ask whether they would consider speaking to them about their experience at the GP practice. During our visit we were able to speak to a total of 16 people.

## Results

### Appointments

There has recently been a new system introduced for the morning surgery at Ferryview. Following a trial of operating solely a walk in service for GP and nurse appointments (other than specific clinics) for two mornings a week, this has now been extended to all mornings Monday-Friday between 8am-11am as a trial until April 2016. Therefore this was an excellent opportunity for Healthwatch Greenwich to talk to patients about their experience of the appointment system.

Although the majority of the patients that we spoke to were using the walk in system, we still asked people how they preferred to book appointments. Everyone we spoke to preferred to book their appointments by phone, nobody had used the online booking system or came into the surgery to make an appointment. Nobody had experienced any problems with the telephone booking system and found it easy to get through to the surgery by phone.

The patients we spoke to told us that they usually had to wait for two or three weeks for a prebookable appointment to be available, which they believed was far too long. Some patients told us that in the past they had attended a walk-in centre or A&E as they were unable to get an appointment with their GP. For this reason, some of the patients we spoke to welcomed the walk in system as they were guaranteed to be seen by a doctor that day, even if that meant waiting at the surgery for a long time. However, other patients were very strongly opposed to the new system and still wanted to be able to book appointments in the morning. The main concern was that the waiting times for the walk in service are too long and also unpredictable meaning patients cannot prepare e.g. how long they will need to pay for parking. Furthermore, it is important to some patients that they are seen by the same doctor for all of their appointments which is not always possible under the walk in service.

### Opening hours

The patients we have spoken to were very happy with the opening hours of the GP practice. Some people we spoke to had made use of the evening and weekend appointments and they found them helpful as it means that people did not have to take time off work to attend appointments.

### Access and giving feedback

Most people had not experienced any difficulties when accessing the GP practice, although some people said that parking was an issue. Only one person had heard of the Patient Participation Group, and that was for the first time today. One person we spoke to had used the interpreting service in the past and said it was very good. Another person echoed this as although they had not used the service, they had family members and friends who have and who reported it to be very good.

## Qualitative feedback

Patients said that the layout of the reception was good as the queueing system was clear. They also praised the self-check in kiosks at the reception as being a good idea and helping to beat the queues. There were positive comments regarding the attitudes of the clinical staff and the care patients received. Some patients would prefer there to be separate children and adults walk in, as they felt this increased the wait and the children's walk in worked well at the branch surgery.

## Additional comments and observations by Healthwatch Greenwich

Our representatives observed that the waiting area was clean and tidy. It felt busy and crowded, but for most of the time there were enough chairs for patients. There is a play area for children. Patients are called to the waiting room by a screen or the duty doctor comes out to call the patients into the room. The practice has paid particular attention to keeping patient confidentiality, the queue is kept back from the desk and there is a sign that ask patients to be mindful of other people's confidentiality. There is lots of relevant information and leaflets displayed on the notice board including the complaints procedure, information about the new walk in system and other health promotion campaigns. The PPG has a dedicated noticeboard and the practice tries to engage with their patients through social media.

## Recommendations

There were some times during the morning where there were fewer patients, the surgery should advertise this to patients to encourage the load to be spread more evenly and reduce the waiting times.

In order to improve the patient experience and manage expectations, the practice should display the estimated waiting times for patients using the walk in service.

Although the practice have a fairly active PPG and they have tried to increase membership, most of the people we spoke to were still unaware of the PPG. The practice should consider how they might take a more active role in promoting the PPG, rather than relying on patients to take on information.

## Conclusion

Healthwatch Greenwich were impressed with the facilities available at the practice and the overall atmosphere of the waiting room, even though it was very busy. Patients seemed happy with the care they receive and there was praise for the interpreting service. We welcome that the practice has recognised that the previous appointment system was not working for patients and has made an attempt to introduce a solution. There are currently some teething problems which are reflected in our recommendations, and not all patients are pleased with the change so this needs to be considered when the practice decides whether to continue with the walk in service.