

Report Title

Views on waiting times

Organisation

This report is part of a project commissioned from Healthwatch Bolton by Bolton GP Federation. The work took place at various sites in the Chorley Roads area.

**Dates:
Research Team**

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Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

This report relates verbatim comments gathered during the time of our visit. All comments recorded added to Healthwatch Bolton's databank of patient comment.

Background

This report is part of a wider project to explore what patients think of 'neighbourhood hubs' and to gather views and ideas about what aspects of such a service would improve their experience of accessing health and wellbeing services. This report is a follow-up to the 2016 'Neighbourhood Hubs - Farnworth' study.

Strategic drivers

One of the new delivery models expected by GMHSCP and reflected in the Bolton Locality Plan is the development of a "Local Care Organisation" (LCO). Primary Care activity is expected to be delivered within the framework of the LCO, as are certain aspects of community based health care. In this context the Bolton GP Federation approached Healthwatch Bolton to develop and deliver another small scale piece of public engagement that would open up this discussion with the public.

Topics/Themes

GP: Primary Care: Waiting Times:

Who we spoke to

We spoke to **61** people at **five** venues in the Chorley Roads area in August 2017. This fieldwork produced **361** comments. **61** comments are used in this analysis.

The interview venues were: Avondale Health Centre (12 people), Howards Pharmacy (8 people), Triangle Church Café (9 people), St. Luke's (20 people), and the UCAN Centre (12 people).

Method

Field researchers used a semi-structured questionnaire and conducted informal interviews with individuals on a one to one basis. All comments were recorded verbatim against the relevant question prompts.

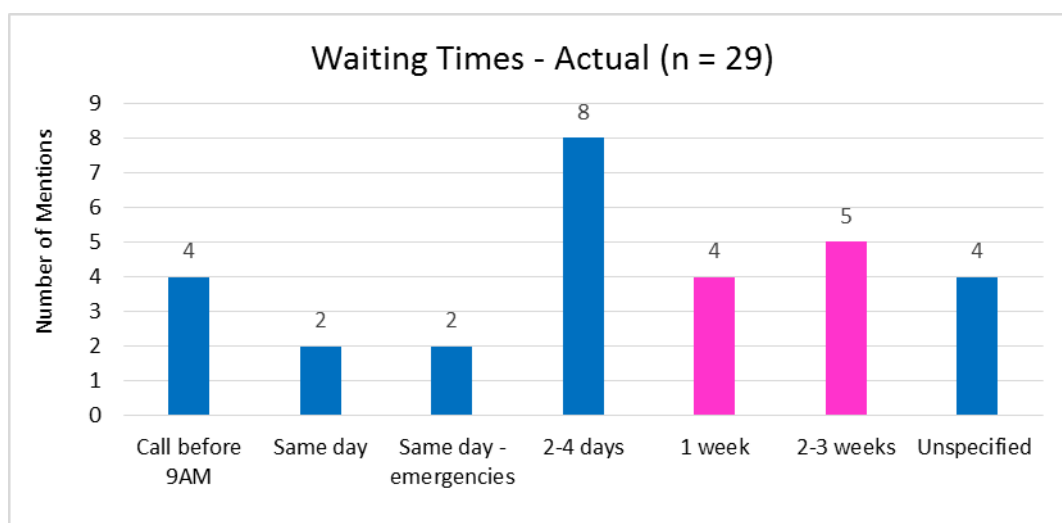
People were asked about GP waiting times, what their current experience is, and what they consider to be acceptable waiting times.

Comments were analysed as follows;

- How long people are currently waiting for routine primary care appointments.
- What people considered to be an acceptable waiting time for a routine primary care appointment.
- Suggestions for improvements to the service overall.

Analysis

Current Waiting Times (GP)



- Experiences of current GP waiting times are mixed.
- Four people (14%) reported they are able to get same day appointments, though urgent appointments made up half of these. Another four stated that if they called before 9AM they might be able to get an appointment that day.
- Eight people (28%) expected to wait 2-4 days for their appointment.

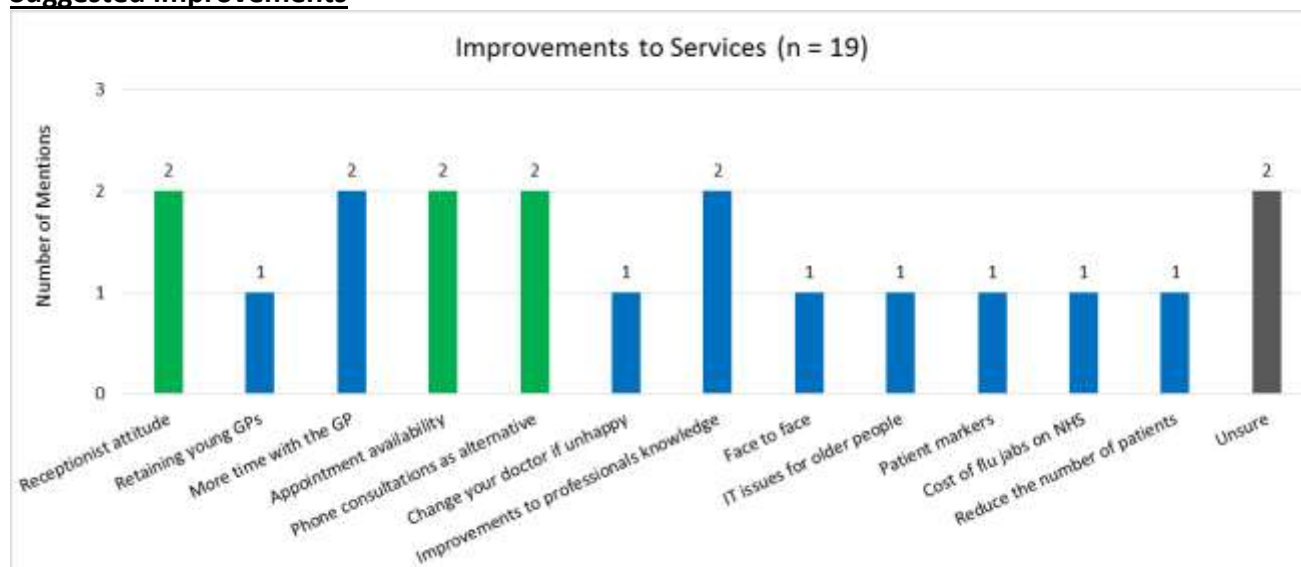
- Overall 16 people (55%) were able to get an appointment within the broadly acceptable time frame of under one week.
- This does mean 9 people (31%) reported waiting one week or more for an appointment, beyond what is expected.

Acceptable waiting times



- 38% of respondents said they would like to get a same day appointment (5 people).
- 54% of people would be happy with an appointment within one week (7 people).
- Though a high number of people wanted a same day appointment, this masks the distinction between emergency 'same day' needs, and the desire to be able to access appointments at any time.
- Introduction of more flexible booking, for example not having to call before 9AM, may ease the situation.

Suggested improvements



- Receptionist attitude, appointment availability, and use of phone consultation, were suggested improvements for GP appointment booking systems.
- There was concern that some receptionists were triaging calls, but were not qualified to decide on this. There are also confidentiality issues here, as they are not the named GP.
- Patients valued face to face time with practitioners, and some would also like more time with them.
- Nevertheless, there were a smaller number of incidences when people felt GPs did not understand or prioritise their condition enough.

Recommendations

- 1) There needs to be more effort to standardise practice in relation to GP appointments arrangements. This should include things like balance of pre-bookable appointments to new appointments, balance of routine vs urgent appointments, standard set of options for making appointments (pre-book, online, telephone) as well as a clear statement of what is and is not acceptable in terms of waiting times.

This finding is in line with the 2016 study in Farnworth.

- 2) Patients generally dislike receptionists triaging calls, alternatives to this practice should be considered.
- 3) Through the Bolton Engagement Alliance, Healthwatch Bolton/Bolton CVS, plan to extend the work on neighbourhood hubs to other areas, we will continue to ask about what people consider to be acceptable waiting times.
- 4) It is hoped that the proposed Neighbourhood Hubs will address the unacceptable waiting times people experience for appointments with allied health professionals such as physio, podiatry and ear syringing. If this is achieved this will clearly improve patient's experience and should lead to better outcomes in relation to early intervention and prevention.

The Comments

Current Waiting Times (25)

"Waiting for the GP is only about a couple of days."

"If my husband is wanting contact with the Parkinson's Nurse he can ring up and they would make him an appropriate appointment. He is seen every 6 months but we can ring in between. It works well."

"My doctor is usually very busy and it can be 3 weeks before you see him. You can get other doctors."

"Quite a while."

"I can wait a week for a GP appointment so there might be times when I leave going to the doctors and think things might go better on their own."

"A week but it could be longer; there's no chance if you needed to be seen that day."

"I usually wait 2/3 days unless it's an emergency."

"I have to wait a week to see my GP."

"We have an average 2 week wait to see a GP unless it is an emergency."

"2 weeks but for emergency appointments you can ring before 8am to get one on the day."

"You have to ring before 08.30 to book an appointment. If you want an appointment that day you can ask for a same day one and you would probably be seen."

"You have to ring before 8am."

"The only time I got to see a GP the same day was when I threatened to go to see A&E and then they found me an appointment."

"Same day if I phone before 8am."

"I like to see the same GP; it can be 2-3 weeks."

"You could wait a week; if it was with a certain doctor it could be a few weeks."

"A few days for a GP appointment."

"I wouldn't expect to wait long for a GP appointment."

"I've not been with the practice long so I wouldn't know how long I'd have to wait."

"My mum needs home visits and that is ok. The doctor will come out on the same day if necessary."

"My practice is very good and the receptionist is helpful and will get me an appointment if I need one."

"Same day if you ring at 8am, and if you ring later you get in the following day."

"I don't know I've never had to phone them and I'm 92 years old."

"3 or 4 days."

"I'm at Halliwell surgery; I can always get in the same day."

Comments on acceptable waiting times (16)

"I feel my GP doesn't want to refer me to the hospital."

"Within a week is ok."

"A week, but 2/3 days if you're not well."

"Within a week."

"Same day if it's urgent."

"If urgent within 24 hours."

"Depending on what the appointment is for."

"Not the same day if it's not an emergency"

"There's always the possibility of a cancellation."

"I don't feel the doctors have time to read your notes."

"Same day."

"Same day."

"The same day (GP Appointment)."

"2/3 days if it is not an emergency."

"Everyone should be seen within a week of their call if it's not an emergency."

"You can't get more reasonable than same day."

Suggestions (20)

"I like to be seen 'face to face'."

"I call into the practice and make my appointments 'face-to-face'. I'm with Dr Cross; she has a clinic at 07.30. It suits people who work."

"I'm not sure."

"There seems to be a big turnover of young GPs. How do we keep them?"

"I'm not sure."

“We need people who are more polite. I’m a patient at Dr Lyons and I find them rude.”

“Receptionists are not ‘doctors plus’ – their attitude is ‘I’m in charge – I’m the boss’. It would be better if appointments could be assessed by clinical staff by employing a nurse.”

“Someone who understands Mental Health instead of just keep putting me on pills. Talking to someone would have helped. I tried for 3 years to get the doctor to diagnose.”

“You need more time with a GP; at my GP its ‘one issue per visit’ and if you’ve multiple things to discuss you need a double appointment but anyone with a long term illness often has more than one problem so we need longer and not to feel pressurised in that way.”

“There’s a need for patient markers; my daughter has a serious mental health issue and both her I wouldn’t mind a marker being put on her record if it meant she could get to see the right person.”

“It’s cheaper for a flu jab at Asda.”

“I wanted to discuss something else at a recent GP appointment but the doctor said we had run out of time; the doctor had actually asked to see me about the second issue.”

“There is an increasing use of IT which is difficult for older people.”

“If there are no appointments there could always be a phone conversation.”

“I have a connective tissue/osteoarthritis condition where I need to keep mobile; not all GPs and Rheumatologists know enough about it.”

“There’s too many people for the GP to see. It’s not that there aren’t enough GPs.”

“If you’re not happy change your doctor.”

“Use telephone consultations more.”

“The doctor won’t ask you to come in to his room until it’s your time; they need that time.”