

**Enter and View visit
Barton House Group Practice, Hackney**

18 December 2018



Service	General Practice
Service address	233 Albion Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 9JT
Provider name	Barton House Group Practice
Date/Time of visit	18/12/2018
E&V representative/s	Catherine Perez Phillips Paula Shaw
Healthwatch staff contact	Catherine Perez Phillips Catherine@healthwatchhackney.co.uk
Practice contact	Blessing Nwachukwu Practice Manager

About Healthwatch enter and view visits

The Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007, as amended by the 2012 Act and directed by Local Healthwatch Regulations 2013, imposes a duty on health and social care providers (including the independent sector) to allow authorised representatives of Local Healthwatch to enter premises they own or control to observe the services being provided. These are legally binding directions and are often referred to as ‘the right to enter and view’.

1. The Visit

Purpose of our visit

We visited Barton House Group Practice to:

- Observe services being provided at Barton House Group Practice and interview patients about their experiences
- Compile a report highlighting good practice and recommendations for improvement

Our decision to visit was influenced by the following factors:

- Routine comments and feedback from service users received by Healthwatch Hackney
- Healthwatch Hackney's general planned programme of visits to GP practices

We will continue to monitor patients' experience of the service to check that the changes being made are working and reflected in the National GP Patient Survey.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Hackney would like to thank the practice manager and staff for accommodating our visit and the patients for participating in our interviews. We are also grateful to our volunteer authorised representative for conducting the visit.

Important Information for management/provider

- We expect Barton House Group Practice to provide an 'action plan and response' to issues raised under 'Recommendations'
- Copies of this report will be circulated to City and Hackney CCG, the CQC and will be made available on the Healthwatch Hackney website
- We will publish Barton House Group Practice's Action Plan and Response along with our report

Disclaimer

- Observations made in this report relate only to the visit carried out at Barton House Group Practice on 18 December 2018 which lasted for a total of three hours
- This report is not representative of all patients of Barton House Group Practice on the day of the visit. It only represents the views 16 patients and one member of staff who were able to contribute within the restricted time available.

2. Key information about this provider

- Barton House Group practice is based at 233 Albion Road in Stoke Newington
- The practice has 12,700 registered patients
- The building is purpose built and well maintained
- The practice is open every day during the week from 8am to 6.30pm
- The early morning surgery runs 7am to 8am on Wednesday and Thursday and a late evening surgery runs 6.30pm 7.30pm on Monday and Tuesday
- Practice staff at the time of the visit:
 - 12 GPs including five salaried GPs and two registrars
 - Two nurses
 - Two health care assistants
 - One practice based pharmacist
 - Eight receptionists plus seven admin staff
- Appointments can be made online or by phone. Phone lines opens at 8am
- Emergency appointments are dealt with by the duty doctor
- Housebound patients, children and those who have been identified as vulnerable are given priority access to appointments
- The practice has a website which contains lots of useful health information and links for easy navigation
- A Turkish speaking advocate is available on Tuesday mornings and Wednesday afternoons, provided by the CCG.
- A Bengali Advocate is available two days a week on Wednesday and Thursdays. The practice also makes use of Language Line for translation services
- There is a specialist Diabetic clinic every Tuesday 9.30am – 11.30am
- Hoxton Legal Advice Service provide welfare advice at the surgery on Wednesday 2pm - 5.30pm
- The Patient Participation Group (PPG) runs a quarterly focus group on a Thursday 1pm – 2pm. The practice is aware the timing restricts the ability of those who work to participate, but the time is popular with regular attendees. 12 people attended the last PPG
- A Neighborhood-wide PPG meeting is planned for May 2019
- The practice has a virtual online patient forum which for patients unable to attend meetings to provide feedback/comments to the practice,

3. Summary of findings/observations

The following observations were noted during the visit:

- Warm, welcoming environment in a nice setting with greenery outside
- Observed first aid box, defibrillator and fire alarms
- Good access for disabled people from the street
- One accessible public toilet located in the reception area
- Information on complaints procedure not visible anywhere in the building at the time of the visit. On request, we were given a leaflet with out of date contact information for the Practice manager
- Patient Participation Group information was on the notice board in the entrance area before the reception but it was not very visible with most patients interviewed on the day unaware of the group.
- The practice website contained a lot of useful information on the homepage which made it easy for patients to navigate and to find the right information.
- Well stocked leaflet racks



Leaflet racks and a child friendly waiting area

Free-to-use weight and blood pressure machine



What patients told us

- Most patients were happy with the treatment received from doctors and nurses
- Some patients felt rushed during their consultation
- Patients told us they could not always see a specific doctor
- Seven of the patients we spoke to raised concerns about the appointments system, once patient was cut off on the phone trying to make an appointment
- Unaware of how to make a complaint
- Unaware of the PPG

Physical environment/ cleanliness/hygiene

- Interior is airy and light with two separate seating areas, well laid out with space for patients waiting for different reasons.
- Good signage for patients to find their way around the building.
- Public toilet was clean, hygienic accessible and fully equipped
- The reception had a separate play area for children with wall based toys and books
- There was a free to use machine that measures weight and blood pressure, providing a print out and an indication of how the individual's reading met BMI guidelines

Transport

- The building is located close to the centre of Stoke Newington with good bus links
- The car park for drop-offs can pose a problem for patients with mobility needs

Patient centred care/dignity/safety

- A notice advises patients to wait in the marked queue rather than approaching the desk to maintain patient confidentiality.
- Elderly patients and people with mobility problems might find it difficult to stand in line

Communication with patients/ Information

- A noticeboard displays photographs of all staff in the reception area, so patients know who's who
- Lots of noticeboards and leaflet racks but some leaflets were out of date e.g. the HC12 leaflet was from 2016
- No information on how to complain on the noticeboards
- The practice website provides a Google Translate option for patients for who English is their second language.
- Website has zoom facility to enlarge text
- A hearing loop has been bought but fitting has not been completed
- Lack of information on the website on how to complain or where to get help to complain from NHS Complaints Advocacy – a patient we spoke to referenced the website as somewhere she would go to, to find out how to complain
- There is information on the Accessible Info Standard on the website. We did not see a poster or leaflet on this in the practice, which would be helpful for patients with communication needs who are not online

Appointments system

- No 'book ahead' appointments available.
- Patients phone or call in to ask for a GP call back – the GP phones back and books a same day appointment, if needed.
- Patients can book online for a GP to call back. Phone lines open from 8am, with a large team taking calls
- Younger patients are much happier but some older patients are struggling.
- The PPG met to discuss this on 15/11/18 and at an all staff meeting on 22/11/18 and produced an action plans to address concerns, a copy of which was provided
- The Practice Manager discussed some solutions e.g. alert put on "housebound" (180 patients) to get priority access. Home visits happen in the afternoon. GPs and Reception made lists of who needs tagging.
- Reception staff can override the online system to make bookings for vulnerable patients. The Practice is in the process of introducing automated telephone appointment system 'Patient Partner' that will enable patient to book telephone appointment 24 hours in advance.
- Patients with social care case workers can see a named GP and in an emergency see the Duty GP

4. Patient feedback

Patient 1

He had been called by the GP and asked to attend an appointment as some test results and been received by the GP. He had been reminded about the appointment with a text. He had already been waiting 15 minutes *'but not a problem'*. He finds the GP treats him well and he has no complaints about them. He said the Reception staff were 60% good and "we all have bad days". He had heard of the PPG and had been invited to a meeting but could not attend as he works part time. He had not used the on-line appointment system. He said the GP books his appointments and he is happy to see any GP. He is happy with the Nurses he has seen. His only suggestion was for appointments to be kept on time.

Patient 2

Has been a patient for over 4 years and finds the new appointment system more complicated and *'not ideal'*. She has used online for prescriptions but encountered problems *'getting 1 tablet instead of 1 box of tablets'*. She liked the GPs and said it was a *'good surgery'*. It had taken a long time for a diagnosis of her diabetes and she felt this should have been quicker. She was able to see a female GP when she wanted to. Reception: *'They sometimes make mistakes but are okay'*. Nurses provided a good service for tests. She was unaware of any complaint process and unaware of the PPG. No suggestions for improvement

Patient 3

Has been a patient for over 7 years (age of her other child). She had a nightmare with the Password trying to make an online appointment. Does not like new appointment system as it is difficult to call at 8am when getting son ready and with baby being ill. *'It's annoying when you don't know when you are going to be called.'* She says the new system is better for emergencies but for non-urgent *'not as good as it was'*. She knows children are a priority and knows the poorly baby will be seen. She had an experience with her baby's milk intolerance not being diagnosed quickly enough. She felt she knew but *'was not listened to'*. She had to buy £40 of non-milk product before the diagnosis was given. The baby was not feeding and was losing weight. The time delay made everything *'more stressful'*. GPs try to be flexible and she has enough time in the consultation; once she had an hour. She was able to see a female GP when necessary. *She says the reception is 'Okay' and that they have a 'thankless task'*. She does not think appointments for the Baby Clinic are a good idea and *'drop ins'* are preferable. **Patient 4**

Patient 4

Quite happy with new appointment system. She rang in and was *'on hold a long time'* but the GP did call back and she got a quick appointment. Difficult if you are working as unable to plan ahead and not knowing if you can get the time off. A bit silly for non-urgent. If urgent it works well and sometimes things are resolved with a phone call. GPs are 90% fantastic and nice GPs. Sometimes not enough time and GPs can't handle more than 2 issues at a time. Can have access to a female GP when necessary. She hadn't heard about the PPG or a complaints process but said she would *'look at the website if I need to'*.

Patient 5

Her son, a 19-year-old student away at university complained about the lack of integrated system. When he is at home, he comes here but he is now registered as a temporary patient as he had to register with a GP in Manchester. This means his records are all at his practice at university even though he has been a patient at Barton House since birth. He thinks there should be access to all his records from both GP practices and I agreed with him.

Patient 6

Been a patient for 3 years and waiting for appointment with the midwife. Baby due in February 2019. Also has a 3-year old. Finds midwife really helpful and can see her for up to an hour if necessary. She is happy with the appointment for her 3-year-old old son but not knowing when the GP will call is unsettling and sometimes she is busy. She has not tried online. She has felt '*rushed*' in GP appointments and feels she can only raise one issue at a time. Most experiences have been positive, but she did not like one doctor but did not make a complaint. She is unhappy with the new GP appointment system but thinks the midwife system is '*brilliant*'. Then she was called to her appointment.

Patient 7

I waited for her son to arrive who was able to interpret as the lady told me she spoke little English. He explained either he, or his sister, always accompanied their Mum and made the appointments for her. He asked his Mum what she thought, and replies were: reception/admin are okay. The Bengali speaker that works there speaks a different dialect so not a help. GPs always treat her with respect and she is able to make herself understood by pointing to where pain is. Referrals to hospital have worked well, e.g. when she had bronchitis there were no delays in her admission. She was unaware of how to complain or what the PPG was. Only niggle is when his sister fetches her Mum to the surgery in the car, she has to leave Mum on her own while she goes to park elsewhere. Not usually a problem but if Mum is feeling very unwell then it is an issue.

Patient 8

A patient for over 5 years, she was waiting to see the nurse (with her '*broken leg*') for a general check-up including blood pressure and cholesterol tests. She is very happy with the nurse who phones her to remind her about the appointment. She is not happy with the new appointment system as she is a care worker and unable to answer her mobile if she is working and she has to work. She needs a letter from the GP to confirm the problem with her leg – she showed me the card from A&E to show to the agency she works for. Reception had told her she could not have a letter. She did '*not know how to complain*' and she was happy to be told she could ask to speak to the practice manager. When she does see a GP, she '*feels respected*' and can see a female GP when she needs to. She was unhappy with reception/admin and said there were two staff who '*are not good*'. Everything else was okay.

Patient 9

Had called in the morning and reported that it was easy to get through and book an appointment. Said that at times there is a long telephone queue but not today. Said that appointment lengths of about 5 minutes were long enough. Reception staff were helpful and that it was easy to get repeat prescriptions. She sees the same GP when she visits and reported that this was not difficult. She was not aware of the PPG.

Patient 10

Reported that it was not easy to book an appointment and that she had had an argument with reception staff when she called, who had then passed her on to speak to the duty doctor. When she had first called the call had been cut off after 10 minutes wait in the call queue, when she called again all the appointments had gone. She was unhappy with the repeated messages to book online as she does not like using this method. She reported that it had taken two weeks of calling every day to get an appointment on the previous Friday

Patient 11

Reported that it was not easy to book an appointment. She had called the previous day and all appointments had gone, she called again the following day and had an appointment but it had taken 10-15 minutes for her call to be answered. She reported having sufficient time with the doctor. She had seen different doctors on different occasions but did not mind this too much. Reported not feeling listened to regarding her treatment. A different doctor from the doctor who had ordered the tests discussed test results with. She felt this was not good. She commented that *'I understand how busy they are. They probably need more staff'*.

Patient 12

Was attending with her son, who translated and commented on her behalf. Said that it was very hard for elderly people to make an appointment. He had raised a concern already with the practice. Reported that getting through to reception is difficult and that when you do the appointments have usually gone. The staff suggest booking online but this is not an option for all patients. He had booked this appointment for his mother 10 days ago. The consultation time is OK sometimes but there is always a feeling of being rushed by the doctor, expressed by their tone and behaviour. The reception staff are in his view *'hit and miss.'* *'Some are challenging in terms of getting an appointment or speaking to someone.'* He reported that it is possible to see the same GP if enough time is given. Repeat prescription ordering is easy online, and treatment and medication has been explained to him and his mother. Said that in his view the surgery and GPs were good.

Patient 13

Reported that booking an appointment was very good. He had called that morning and the doctor had called him back and had asked him to get to the surgery in 10 minutes. He had rushed in but had then found himself waiting 45 minutes without seeing the doctor. Said *'Almost certainly I get enough time with the doctor. They give me extra if I need it. The reception staff are fantastic.'* For repeat prescriptions he calls the pharmacist who does it for him: *'a fantastic system'*. He does not see the same GP and would like to as he has a lot of different things wrong with him. His GP retired and he has not been told who his replacement is. In general, he feels listened to and that referrals to the hospital are done efficiently.

Patient 14

She used the Patient Access app to book an appointment. If she uses it first thing in the morning she reported that it is usually possible to get an appointment the same day or the following day. She said it can be difficult if the GP calls back when she is at work and says, for example, to come to the surgery in an hour as she might not be close enough to the surgery to make it in time. She said: *'It's difficult if I have a number of things to talk about. You used to be able to talk about three things, then it went to two and now you can only talk about one issue. It is especially difficult when you might have a range of symptoms that could all be linked. It can be really frustrating. I'm not sure if you can book a double appointment to talk about a lot of different things.'* She reported feeling very rushed during appointments. She reported that doctors were reluctant to make a referral to a specialist, telling her *'let's just see how it goes'* or prescribing a range of different medications rather than making a referral.

Patient 15

Reported mixed experiences with booking an appointment but said that the new system was better than the previous booking system. She recently experienced a difficulty with one of her repeat prescriptions getting dropped off the system.

Patient 16

Pregnant woman and her partner were at the practice with a booked appointment to see the midwife. Woman spoke little English. Her partner confirmed that a translation service had been offered. Reported that they were listened to in relation to birth plans. Said that it takes a long time to get an appointment with a GP. They sometimes use the online booking service. If the issue is non urgent an appointment, it is given in 3 to 4 days which he felt was too long. *'Sometimes I'm in pain and can't see a doctor'*. Said that the reception staff were good. Usually sees different doctors. If you want to see your own GP it takes even longer to get an appointment.

5. Staff comments

We had the opportunity to speak to the practice manager Blessing Nwachukwu. We felt she was very open with, for example she gave us a copy of the minutes of their last practice meeting. The practice changed their booking system in July 2018. Previously patients were waiting several weeks for appointments and there were a high number of no-shows. The change was supported by the GP Confederation.

The practice manager was very aware of all developments. The practice is links with other practices and within the NW2 Neighbourhood. Practice managers from all the practices are in a WhatsApp group and work together. Priorities for NW2 are child immunisation and a replacement for One Hackney.

Summary of practice managers' comments

- **Appointments:** There is a recognition that the system needs tweaking to make it work for all patients. The tagging of some patient records as priority for appointments is an example of recent changes in response to feedback. If all appointments for the same day have gone it is possible for patients to be seen at the Hub (Nightingale Practice is the nearest) or to call back the following day
- **Complaints:** These are dealt with by the practice manager if they are of an admin nature or a GP if clinical
- **Recruitment** of GPs, admin staff and receptionists is problem for the practice. Key factors include the stress of GP work which means that many young doctors prefer to do locum work. As a locum they have less responsibility and less paper work, for example following up on test results. Brexit may also be a factor in making recruitment more difficult

6. Recommendations

All recommendations are based on patients' feedback and our observations

Recommendation 1 The appointments system needs to be kept under continual review and improvements made to ensure that patients who are unable or do not wish to book online are not disadvantaged

Recommendation 2 Practice should take steps to ensure patients do not feel rushed during consultations so patients can fully express their needs and concerns

Recommendation 3 The practice may consider reviewing its current 5 minute appointment time and offer a longer consultation time to those who need it, for example to discuss more than one symptom

Recommendation 4 Patient Participation Group information should be displayed more visibly to ensure those patients who are not using practice's website are also aware of the group

Recommendation 5 The Complaints procedure should be visibly displayed in the waiting area and the leaflet updated with the current practice manager's details and the Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy service

Recommendation 6 The Complaints form should be made available in the public waiting area and prominently on the website along with information on the local Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy service confidentiality and independence of patients concerns and complaints) along with information

7. Summary of demographic/equality information collected

Barton House Group Practice has 12,700 patients

Ethnic category	
White	4
White Other	2
Mixed	1
Black or Black British	4
Asian or Asian British	4
Other Asian	
Turkish	1

Gender	
Male	3
Female	13

8. Barton House Group Practice Action Plan

Healthwatch Hackney recommendation	Practice Response/Action Plan
<p>The appointments system needs to be kept under continual review and improvements made to ensure that patients who are not able or do not wish to book online are not disadvantaged</p>	<p>The appointment system is under constant review. It has been a standing item on the partner's meeting agenda since its introduction.</p> <p>We have devoted regular whole practice meetings to reflect on feedback from staff and patients.</p> <p>We have responded to PPG concerns by producing an action plan to limit risks and inconvenience for group with vulnerabilities.</p>
<p>Practice should take steps to ensure patients do not feel rushed during consultations so patients can fully express their needs and concerns</p>	<p>The new system allows more flexibility than our old one. Total consultation time includes telephone and face to face portions. Face to face appointments can now be longer than the standard 10 minutes if required and spaced out to minimise waiting time for those in the surgery.</p>
<p>The practice may consider reviewing its current 5 minute appointment time and offering a longer consultation time to those who need it, for example to discuss more than one symptom</p>	<p>There is no 5 minutes appointment. This is a nominal length of time created to provide a face to face slot. In reality patients are given a flexible face to face slot with as long as is required. Face to face appointments can be shorter than they were previously as much of the history is taken before hand on the telephone and a management plan prepared.</p>
<p>Patient Participation Group information should be displayed more visibly to ensure those patients who are not using practice's website are also aware of the group</p>	<p>This will be implemented</p>
<p>The Complaints procedure should be visibly displayed in the waiting area and the leaflet updated with the current Practice managers details and Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy service</p>	<p>This will be implemented</p>
<p>The Complaints form should be made available in the public waiting area and prominently on the website along with information on the local Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy service</p>	<p>This will be implemented.</p>