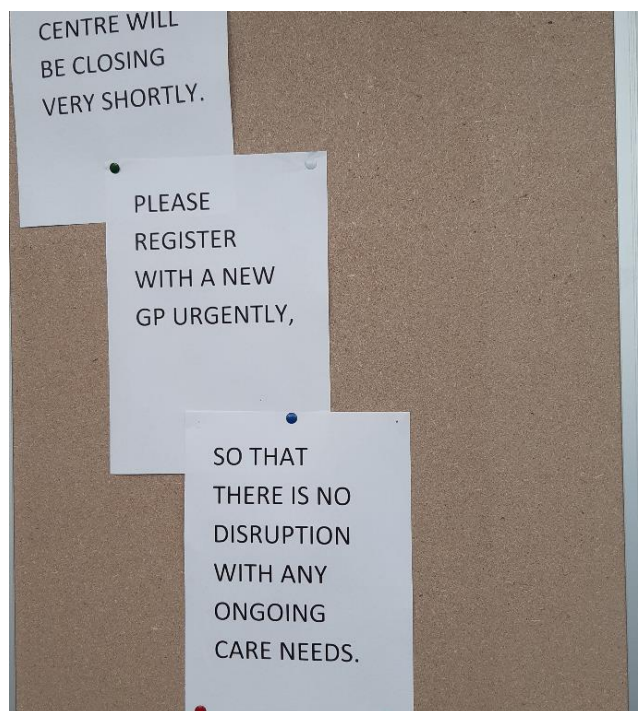


Enter and View

Abney House Medical Centre

23 September 2019



Service	General Practice
Service address	Abney House Medical Centre 2 Defoe Rd Stoke Newington London N16 0EF
Provider name	Abney House Medical Centre
Date/Time of visit	Monday 23 September 2019, 9.30am – 1.00pm
E&V representative/s	Catherine Perez Phillips Chloe Macri Malcolm Alexander
Healthwatch staff contact	Chloe Macri chloe@healthwatchhackney.co.uk
Practice contacts	Birgul D. Jelal cahccg.abneyhousemedicalcentre@nhs.net
<p>About Healthwatch enter and view visits</p> <p>The Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007 as amended by the 2012 Act and directed by Local Healthwatch Regulations 013 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’.</p>	

The Visit

Purpose of our visit

Abney House Medical Centre closed on 18 October 2019. We visited Abney House Medical Centre to:

- Observe how the closure process was affecting both staff and patients.
- Obtain the views of patients regarding their experience with the service pre-closure.
- Consult with patients about their experiences of the closure and transferring to another practice.

Our decision to visit was influenced by the following factors:

- Community discussion and media attention following the announcement of the closure.
- Healthwatch Hackney's attendance at the public meeting where many unhappy patients voiced their concerns.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Hackney would like to thank the practice managers 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 (Note: an authorised representative is a Healthwatch Hackney volunteer trained to carry out Enter and View visits).

Important Information for management/provider

- Upon publication of this report, Abney House Medical Centre will no longer be operating, therefore, no recommendations were provided for Abney House Medical Centre. Copies of the report will be sent to the practice manager as discussed during the visit.
- Recommendations will be made to the CCG and the Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCC) about the process of closing GP practices.
- Copies of this report will be circulated to City and Hackney CCG, the PCCC, CQC and will be made available on the Healthwatch Hackney website.
- Flyers have been distributed to three neighbouring GP practices, to promote continuity of feedback regarding the service closure and re-registering process.

Disclaimer

- Observations made in this report relate only to the visit carried out at Abney House Medical Centre on 23 September 2019, which lasted for a total of three and a half hours.
- This report is not representative of all patients of Abney House Medical Centre on the day of the visit. It only represents the views of the members of staff and patients who were able to contribute within the restricted time available.

Key information about this provider

- The centre is due to close on 18 October 2019.
- It is located within the Stoke Newington ward.
- Pre-closure, the centre originally had 2,800 registered patients.
- On the date of the visit, the centre still had 1,841 patients registered.
- Practice staff at the time of the visit:
 - One GP
 - One Healthcare Assistant
 - One Practice Manager
 - Two Receptionists.

Information surrounding closure

- The centre is closing due to a combination of reasons. The lead GP is handing back his primary care contract, there have been ongoing problems with staff recruitment and there have been ongoing issues surrounding the expiring lease on the building.
- Patients were notified of the closure 12 weeks before the planned closure, through two postal letters, emails and texts both from the practice and the CCG.
- Patients were invited to attend one of two public meetings held at the centre on Thursday 15 August 2019, either in the morning or evening.
- All patients have been encouraged to register with another GP in the surrounding area prior to the closure. Their medical files will then be transferred to their new practice. They have been provided with a list of GP practices nearby, however they have not been given further information on the quality, specializations or capacity of these practices. If they do not register elsewhere, the CCG will randomly allocate individuals to a GP in their catchment area.

The following observations were noted during the visit:

- Despite a letter and email sent to the practice manager one week beforehand, the staff were not aware of our statutory visit.
- Both entrance and waiting room were very sparse due to the upcoming closure and loss of patients.
- Blood pressure machine located in corner of room.
- Complaints flyer and Dementia Alliance information on noticeboard.
- Toilet located within reception area.
- There were very few patients in the Centre on the morning of the visit.
- Children's play and puzzle equipment was located within the waiting room area.



Physical environment/ cleanliness/hygiene

- Reception and waiting area both clean and tidy.
- At the entrance to the practice were two large rubbish bins, which did not make for a welcoming entrance.
- The waiting area had plenty of space and chairs.
- The practice has a blood pressure machine on the ground floor for use by patients.



What patients told us

- They spoke highly of the staff and were very happy with the quality of care they had received at Abney House.
- Patients were “gutted it was closing”.
- One patient said their families had been coming to the practice for 42 years. This patient was yet to register with a new GP, as “I don’t want to change and will prolong it as long as possible”.
- One patient said the service was friendly, proactive and close-knit and the reception staff and doctor all knew the patients.
- One patient was worried it may be harder to get an appointment at a new practice, as they are bigger and have more patients.
- Expressed concern with the closure; “Lots of services closing in Hackney, not good for residents, such a shame”.

What staff told us

- The staff felt that the practice provided an old-fashioned style of service, which was very patient oriented, especially in regard to the needs of their older patients.
- Staff said the practice provided high quality services, same day appointments and effective triage, due to its smaller size and patient-centred approach.
- Staff are currently seeking new jobs, following closure in October.

Communication with patients/ Information

- The Practice Manager was working directly with Turkish speaking patients to assist with re-registration.
- Patients were notified of the closure 12 weeks before the planned closure date, through two postal letters, emails and texts both from the practice and the CCG.

Website

- The practice has a website www.abneyhousemc.nhs.uk, however, upon closure it will no longer be operating.

This practice will be closing in October 2019. Please register elsewhere if you are a patient of this practice

Patient feedback

As mentioned, on the day of the visit, there were not many patients at the centre. The following patients were interviewed in the waiting areas.

Patient 1 has been using the service for 42 years with his whole family. Believes the service is great and is gutted it is closing. Lives around the corner and received letters and texts about the closure, both from the practice and the CCG. Will hopefully go to Stratham Grove Practice, however is yet to register with new GP because doesn’t want to change, will do it on the last week.

Patient 2 has been coming to the practice for 31 years and described the service as friendly and close-knit. Reception staff and Doctor knew him personally. Said the practice was a proactive surgery and the Dr was great. He received an email and a letter, however was on holiday during the public meeting. Patient took the day off to re-register and will go to Broadway Market GP. He is worried about moving practice, as will have to see a new doctor and a busy clinic will mean it is harder for him to get an appointment. Would prefer face to face appointments, which are hard to get in a busy practice. Believes the lease issue is why they are closing. Is seeing lots of services closing down in Hackney, which is not good for residents and is such a shame. Says Abney House Medical Centre was the best practice he'd ever been to.

Staff feedback

We had the opportunity to speak to all staff working in the practice on the day of the visit.

Practice Manager

- Has worked in the practice for 19 years.
- Current situation has been very nerve-wracking and there is lots to do for herself and the GP, before closure.
- Says the patients are upset and sad. They like the small size and the familiarity with staff and the doctor.
- Has communicated with Turkish speaking patients, older adults and more vulnerable patients, to assist them with moving to a new practice.
- At all Patient Participation Group (PPG) meetings, the status of the practice as a single GP practice was brought up. This caused the members much distress, however there was no success in recruiting another GP.
- CCG will reallocate any unregistered patients after the deadline.
- She is currently dealing with issues regarding the huge movement of medical records.
- She is responsible for removing, clearing out and redecorating the premises and said she would have liked more support in regards to equipment removal and HR documents.

Reception staff

- Reception staff were very committed to the practice and clearly have a positive relationship with the patients. The reception staff felt that the CCG could have been more helpful in assisting Dr Salih.
- The staff felt that the practice provided a style of service which was very patient oriented, especially with regard to the needs of their older patients.
- Staff said the practice provided high quality service, same day appointments and effective triage, due to its smaller size and patient-centered approach.

Doctor

- Has known about closure for a year and has reached out to the CCG for support.
- Unable to get additional GPs and the practice is therefore unmanageable, in relation to meeting the needs of patients.

- Since the closure announcement, it has been quite traumatic and patients are tearful with him. He had to explain his reasons for the closure to each patient, which he found to be emotionally draining.
- He has to terminate the lease and there is a huge bill for repairs.
- He said it is a hard time for small practices; they provide a high quality of care but there are lots of meetings and politics, which take the time away from patient care.
- He is not sure how easily the other GP practices will absorb the patients here and is especially worried about his older, more vulnerable patients.
- He also stated that after this experience, he would not be a partner again as it is too much responsibility.

Healthcare Assistant

- He stated that the pressure of having to provide 'enhanced GP services' was too much for the practice and had become a 'box ticking' exercise. See; www.england.nhs.uk/publication/gp-contract-2017-18-enhanced-service-specifications/.
- Described the practice as a very traditional practice with very committed staff. He noted that many patients had cried when they found out the practice was closing.
- He also noted that smaller practices are closer to their patients, as they can see the same doctor each visit and there is greater continuity of care. He said that larger practices may find it harder to look after older adults, especially those with dementia.

Recommendations and follow up

- 1) Upon consultation with reception staff, it was agreed that Healthwatch Hackney would develop a leaflet to distribute to the three main GP practices taking in new patients, previously from Abney House. The leaflet would ask for patient's experiences and feedback regarding the closure and the transfer process. Please see attached.

A draft leaflet was approved by Abney House reception staff and was then circulated to the three GP practices. Healthwatch Hackney will collate any information received from patients following the closure of Abney House and produce an addendum to this report in early 2020.

- 2) When, due to issues of GP capacity, staffing, clinical capacity or other organisational issues, the GP/s or CCG plan to close or substantially alter the delivery of services in a GP practice, we recommend the following action be taken by the CCG:
 - Staff, patients and Healthwatch to be advised at the earliest possible stage.
 - An initial meeting held at this stage of the process to advise staff and patients of the challenges ahead.
 - Options are presented to staff and patients about possible solutions to resolve the challenges faced by the practice.
 - The CCG and/or GP/s to appraise and cost options.
 - After one month of the initial meeting GP/s and CCG to meet again with staff and patients to present their assessment and risk analysis regarding implementation of at least two options for recovery and sustainability of the GP practice.

- Carry out a formal consultation process with the GP practice patients to determine the best way forward.
 - Ensure that Healthwatch and the PPG are actively involved in the consultation process, the determination of outcomes and their delivery.
- 3) Provide quality assistance for patients in the act of re-registering with another practice, including detailed information on individual GP practices to promote patient choice.
 - 4) As this is the second GP practice to close in Hackney in a short while, we believe it is of upmost importance to address this issue and enforce a clearer process for closing surgeries.

We received the following response from Richard Bull, Programme Director, Primary Care City and Hackney CCG, to Healthwatch Hackney's recommendations.

Firstly the CCG has no plans to close any local practices. Sorsby and Abney were both reactive closures. There is support available to help prevent practices closing. If a practice is having problems then I would hope it involves its patients in discussing those problems and findings solutions. Equally if a practice is planning to make a change that substantially alters the delivery of its service then I would very much expect the practice to involve its patients in that change.

We directed Abney patients to the NHS GP finder where there is loads of information to help patients make an informed choice. Patients can also seek advice from their current practice re other local options.

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/GP/n15lz/Results/4/-0.0777716413140297/51.5339202880859/4/0?distance=25>



Have you recently moved from Abney House Medical Centre?

Healthwatch Hackney is following up patients who moved practices following the closure of Abney House

- How did the transfer go?
- How are you finding your new GP practice?
- Any problems?

Please contact Chloe at Healthwatch Hackney
Have Your Say!

chloe@healthwatchhackney.co.uk
020 3960 7454