

Enter & View

Report

Laurel House Surgery
Tamworth
4th March 2020



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Part of the Healthwatch Staffordshire remit is to carry out Enter and View Visits. Healthwatch Staffordshire Authorised Representatives will carry out these visits to health and social care premises to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows Authorised Representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand. Healthwatch Staffordshire 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 Staffordshire safeguarding policy, the service manager will be informed and the visit will end. The Local Authority Safeguarding Team will also be informed.

Provider Details

Provider: Laurel House Surgery, Tamworth
Address: 12 Albert Rd, Tamworth B79 7JN
Service Type: Primary Care (GP Practice)
Date of Visit: 4th March 2020

Authorised Representatives

This visit was made by two Authorised Representatives of Healthwatch Staffordshire.
Ian Wright and Rachel Pollard

Purpose of Visit

- To observe the physical environment of the practice.
- To listen to and capture the experiences of service delivery from patients.

The methodology to be used is to

- Gain patients experience of the surgery by inviting people to complete a patient survey.
- Talk to a senior staff member about the surgery, what services are available to patients, how are patient appointments managed and how the surgery gathers patient feedback.
- Make observation of the communal parts of the premises.
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About the visit

Two Authorised Representatives visited the Surgery between 08.30 am to 12.15pm. During our visit patients completed 20 surveys. We spoke with the Practice Manager Wendy Roe to gain information about how the surgery is managed.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Staffordshire would like to thank the Practice Staff and the patients for their co-operation during the visit.

Physical Environment

External

The main entrance accessed by steps, with ramped access further along front of building. It was not easy to find the building as there are no signs visible to people walking along the pavement that the Surgery is there, the gold plaque signage adjacent to the front door is only visible when you have reached the gate.

The outside appears well maintained. There is sufficient space to have a sign by the pavement, and also one indicating the disabled access, which is not particularly visible if approaching from the car park which is further down the road.

There is a small car park at the rear of the building that, we were told, is used primarily by staff. There is a patient car park 50 yds down the road on a piece of land that is owned by the Practice. This holds maybe 20 vehicles but is frequently abused by other businesses and shoppers who will park there because it is free. The Surgery have approached businesses about this, but it remains an ongoing problem, and the Surgery is considering whether to retain the land. Patients can get annoyed if they can't park there and have to pay on the adjacent car park.



Internal

There are 2 self check-in terminals, on the day of the visit one was working and one wasn't. This has been the case for sometime and it was explained to us that the CCG upgraded the system to Windows 10, but the terminals operate on Windows 7, which is now un-supported, hence the faulty one cannot be repaired. The surgery have been waiting 5 months for this to be resolved, but have no date as yet, and the working terminal can of course fail at any time.

There were 3 anti-bacterial hand gel's in Reception.

The self check-in terminal screen is cleaned in a morning, but not throughout the day.

There is no electronic patient call system, the doctors all come out of their rooms and call people in. We were told that if there are patients with sight loss or hearing problems, this is flagged at the Reception and the doctors can ensure they find the patient if there is no response when called.

We were advised that the Practice is considering putting media screens in.

The practice is housed within a large old house, that used to be where the doctor lived and practised when it first opened. It is on 2 floors with stairs to access the GP's upstairs - anyone unable to use stairs would be seen downstairs. There are numerous rooms for Practice staff, and around 5 different waiting areas on both levels.

There is a good sized Reception area on the ground floor and the queue is requested to stand a good distance away from the desk to give some privacy and confidentiality. There have not been any adaptations to the Desk for DDA compliance. It was explained to us that anyone in a wheelchair would go to an area at the side that is fractionally lower, or the Reception staff would come round to the side to talk to them.

There is a hearing loop on the Reception desk, but we had to look closely as it was partially covered by leaflets.

We were told that should a patient wish to talk privately when at the Desk, there is a designated room, and if that was unavailable they would use the Practice Managers office which is close by.

All the areas and furnishings were clean and odour free - the majority of the seating is bench style covered in fabric around the edge of the room, with one area having blue plastic seating. There were no visible signs of other chair types such as higher ones with arms or bariatric chairs.

There is plenty of space in the downstairs Reception and waiting areas for wheelchair users.

The latest CQC report from February 2018 is displayed towards the rear of the downstairs reception areas close to one of the Practice Managers offices. It was felt that they will be inspected shortly, as 2 recent planned inspections were both cancelled by the CQC.

Due to the number of waiting rooms, some information can feel a little 'out of the way', and not too obvious to the patient;

There was some information about the Patient Participation Group (PPG) although this was not prominently displayed. We noted that there were no PPG minutes on the practice website since July 2016.

Information about chaperones - there is a number at Reception and posters advising this.

Translator - no posters were identified, but we were advised that a service is available through Reception.

Information on how to make a complaint - other than a suggestion box on entry to the Reception, nothing was immediately visible about how to make a complaint.

What information there was appeared up to date and easy to read, but some is not overly visible and/or not repeated in each waiting area.

Toilets, including a disabled toilet, are available on both levels, and appeared easily accessible and clean. There are no signs within the toilets to say they are regularly checked for cleanliness.

There is a baby changing area and breastfeeding area on the ground floor.

The surgery does not currently have a dispensary.

There was a discussion with the Practice Manager about themed groupings of posters and information - some is already done in terms of Flu, Maternity and Alcohol, and Dementia & Alzheimers is together on one board that also incorporates mental health, all in the rear downstairs waiting area. There is very little information about mental health support.

Some of the poster displays were very good, although some leaflets in a rack looked rather tired as they were curling over at the top.



Information about the surgery

Staff Numbers / Roles

There are currently 4 GP partners, 3 of which are female. 2 Partners are leaving and being replaced.

There are 3 salaried GP's all female, and they are recruiting for 1 more.

There are 2 Advanced Nurse Practitioners.

There are 3 Practice Nurses, and 2 Healthcare Assistants, and there is 1 new Physician Associate scheduled to start in April.

A Phlebotomist from Good Hope visits daily, and one from Queen's Hospital Burton visits once per week.

Practice Opening hours

The Practice is open from 08.00 to 18.30 daily for appointments. Each GP on duty offers 15 am slots, and either 12 or 14 pm slots.

Extended hours are available every Tuesday, with other staggered days throughout the year including 4 or 5 Saturdays.

The practice offers the following services and clinics:

- Maternity and Childcare, with a midwife visiting every Tuesday and Thursday and is available on Wednesdays at Fazeley Practice.
- Diabetic
- Coronary Heart Disease
- Medicals for HGV and pre-adoption
- Minor Surgery
- Asthma
- Well Baby clinic - at the Fazeley practice.

There are separate staff meetings for each area - one for Nurses organised by the Nurse Manager, one for Receptionists and 2 for Administrators.

Staff have protected learning time on the second Tuesday afternoon of each month.

Appointment system - appointments can be made online, by phone or in person. We were told how the Practice would like to increase the number of online appointments, but this obviously puts some patients at a disadvantage. The online booking has currently been removed due to Coronavirus, and the need to screen for appointments more carefully.

We were advised that patients can call to make appointments at any time whilst the surgery is open and text communication takes place with around 75% of registered patients. The remaining 25% are not communicated with about appointments by text as they either don't have a mobile or have not provided the details.

It was explained to use that phone calls come in on a loop, and can be answered by any one of 7 staff, either on reception (which the Practice is trying to reduce), or in the back office which is the preferred route. We were told that there are no details about length of waiting to be answered or missed calls due to patients hanging up as the telephone system is not sufficiently technical.

We were advised that are looking at introducing a triage system to better direct patients to the most appropriate service, building on the current Care Navigation. Alongside this they are hoping to introduce 15 min appointments rather than the regulation 10 min as they feel this is necessary. Whilst this will reduce the number of appointments daily, they feel the triage system will compensate for this.

The 4 partners all have specialist areas including minor surgery for moles, cysts etc.

There is not a specific number of 'on the day' appointments - the Practice Manager feels there are more than is necessary and would like to have more planned appointments. This is influenced by the Surgery offering a 'Sit and Wait' service, where patients can visit between 09.00-11.00 Mon - Fri and wait to see a GP, although the wait can be lengthy.

Reception staff have recently undertaken Care Navigation training. We were told there is a template to follow but it was unclear as to whether this was being used by all staff as they are holding back on updating training until the new triage system is introduced in the next 2-3 months.

Collection of patient feedback - there is a suggestion box in the main reception area, although the forms have folded over so much that you can't actually see the word 'suggestions'. The Physicians also give out cards for feedback. The Practice does not respond directly but will discuss issues individually. We were told that most complaints are about the phone system.

We were told that the Practice will always consider making changes following feedback and that they are trying to be more aware of Carers and Autism, but besides those could not give any more specific examples.

We were advised that there is an active PPG, and the last meeting attracted around 8 patients. There is no virtual PPG group. There have been no PPG minutes put on the Practice website since July 2016, although 2 Newsletters were put on in 2019.

It was explained how the PPG members helped with the last flu vaccine clinics. The PPG also made a suggestion that the many rooms used by GP's within the premises be numbered for ease of use by patients and this has been successfully carried out by the Practice. To better inform patients of the work carried out by the PPG (who regularly attend the District PPG meeting), maybe they could take on responsibility for one of the many display boards that could feature last minutes, newsletters, next meeting date etc.

Specimens are returned into the boxes provided at Reception. Bloods are collected twice each day for Good Hope and once per day for Queen's Burton. Patients are given a slip to phone in for results, but the Surgery would contact them beforehand if there was anything urgent.

The Practice used to keep records of missed appointments, but doesn't currently, and they are not aware of any 'serial offenders'. At present, they would only contact the DNA (Did not attend) if it was in relation to a child that failed to attend, in case there was a safeguarding issue. They do not sanction patients who consistently DNA. They do not view a DNA as costing the NHS money, as the doctors can use the time for other matters.

Staff Experiences and Observation

Whilst sitting towards the rear waiting area just before leaving, we witnessed a young boy who was with his grandmother. The appointment for the boy was upstairs, but the grandmother was meant to accompany him and was unable to access via the stairs and there is no lift.

The doctor came down to see them, and then visited Reception to find an unoccupied meeting room downstairs that they could use, which was done in less than a minute. The grandmother was very pleased, and it was an excellent piece of 'customer service' to witness.



Patient Experiences and Observations

Healthwatch invited patients in the waiting room to complete our survey to gain feedback about patients experience with this GP practice.

20 surveys were completed, although not all of the patients answered all of the questions. Patients had the opportunity to add their own comments for each question.

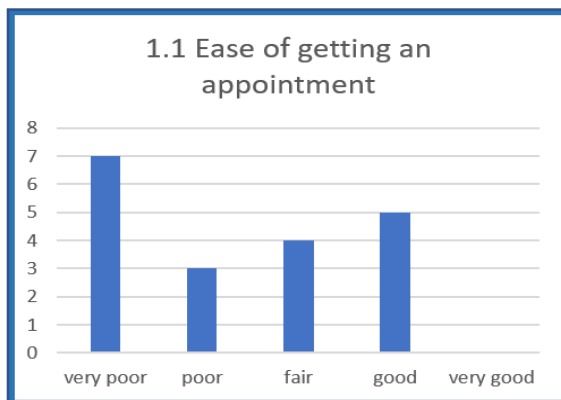
Results of the survey

1. We asked people "How do you rate your experience in accessing GP service?"

1.1 Ease of getting an appointment

1.2 Getting through on the telephone

1.3 Online appointments



14 patients said that getting through on the telephone was very poor or poor, with 4 patients saying it was fair and only 2 saying it was good or very good.

"Absolutely terrible"

"Usually long queue on phone"

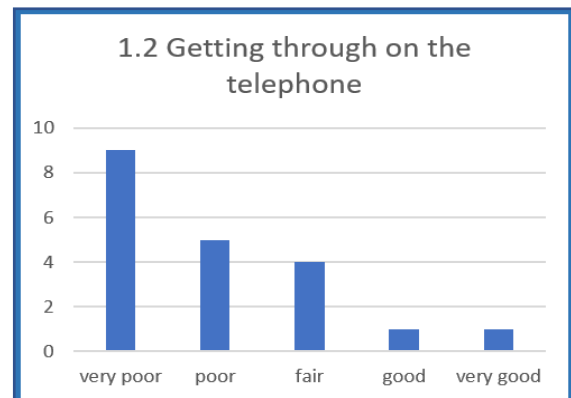
"Phone is impossible"

Patients views on the ease of getting an appointment varied with half saying that it was very poor or poor and half saying it was fair or good,

"Absolutely appalling"

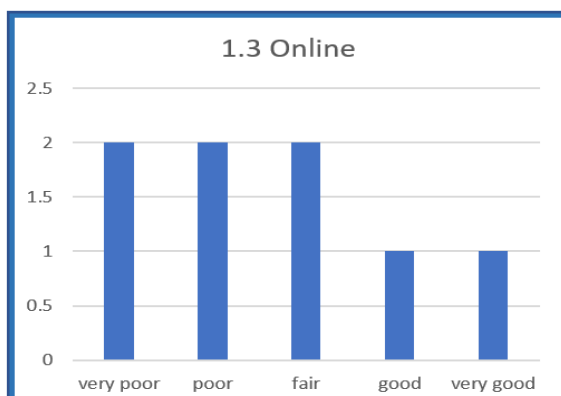
"Good If you call on the day - far too long if want to book in advance"

"3 - 4 weeks, but can get in on the day"



"Spent 30 minutes waiting in a queue of 12 calls only to be cut off when put through"

"Automated telephone system is unserviceable"

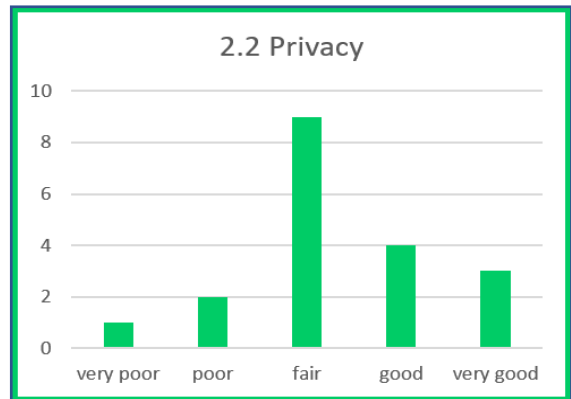
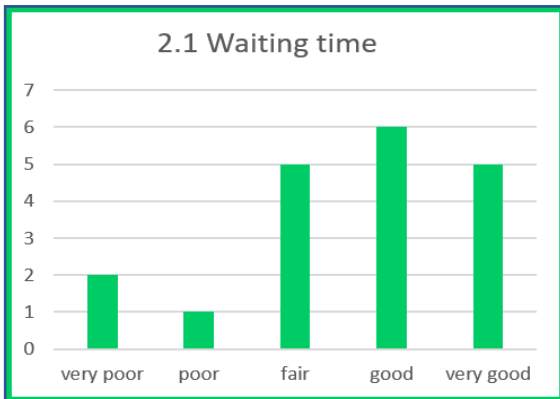


Only 8 patients responded to this question with other patients saying that they had not used this and people saying that they were not online. The responses were split with half saying it was poor or very poor and half saying it was fair, good or very good.

"Never tried to get appointment online"

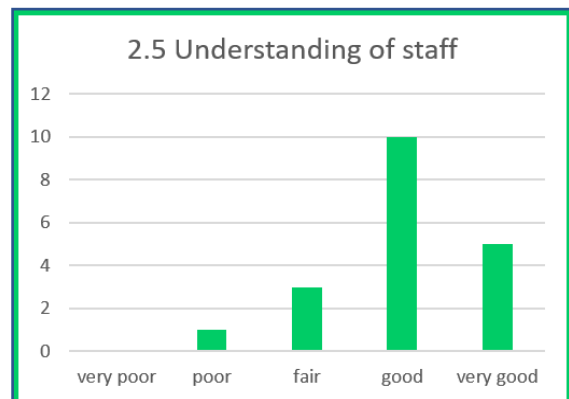
2. We asked people “How do you rate your experience at the reception desk”?

We asked people to rate the waiting time (2.1), privacy (2.2), friendliness (2.3), helpfulness (2.4) and understanding of staff (2.5)



All areas were rated good or very good by the majority of people, although this reduced with regard to privacy with more people rating it fair rather than good or very good.

There were a small number of negatives in all areas with a few people giving rating of poor and in respect of waiting time very poor.

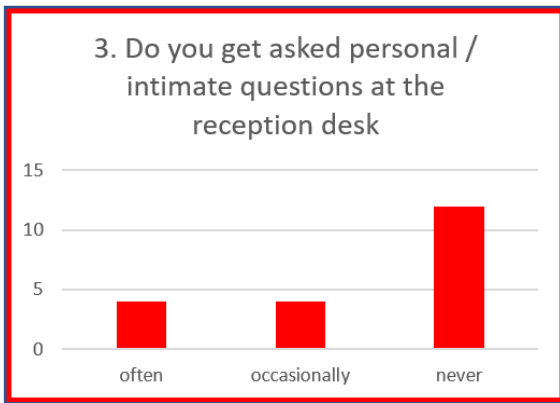


“The staff are OK”

“Waiting area very open. Some staff are friendly - one or two can be aggressive”

“Some reception staff are very rude and can make you feel uncomfortable”

“Understanding of staff - some good, some not”



3. We asked people “Do you get asked personal / intimate questions at the reception desk?”

Just over half of people said that they were never asked these type of questions, with the balance split evenly between often or occasionally.

“They say they need to know to be able to assess, sometimes it’s uncomfortable”

“Explaining personal and intimate details over the phone can be uncomfortable”



4. Privacy and Dignity

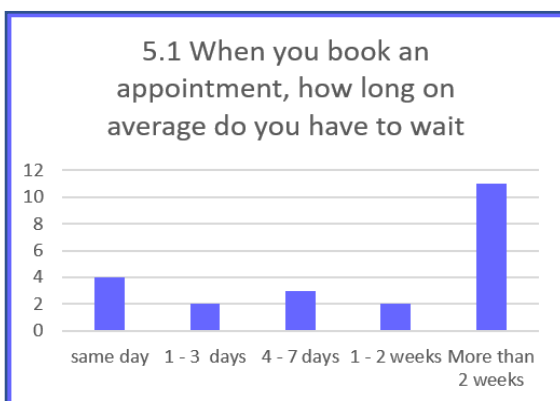
We asked people if they were happy with the level of privacy, dignity and respect within the GP Practice.

Nearly all people said they were happy or usually happy with this. Just one person said they were not happy and commented *“I am thinking about changing GP practice”*

5. Appointments - We asked “When you book an appointment how long on average do you have to wait” (5.1) and “how satisfied are you with the time you have to wait for an appointment” (5.2).

Some people ticked both same day and over 2 weeks, explaining that routine appointments were generally over 2 weeks, but they could get same day appointments if necessary.

Only 2 people indicated that they were satisfied with the waiting time for an appointment with over half of people saying they were unsatisfied or extremely unsatisfied.



“when needing an appointment, waiting this long could make people much more unwell”

“Can usually see someone other than my own GP”

“Seeing family doctor is rare”

“too long if you want to book in advance”

“current waiting time is 3 weeks”

“Up to 8 weeks - not always like that, getting worse”

“Same day if ring on day at 8 a.m. - 1 - 2 weeks for normal booking”



6. Seeing other health professionals

We asked “When you booked your appointment, were the options of seeing other health professionals offered to you?”

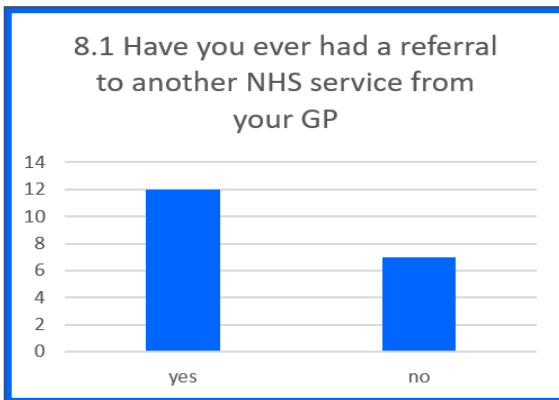
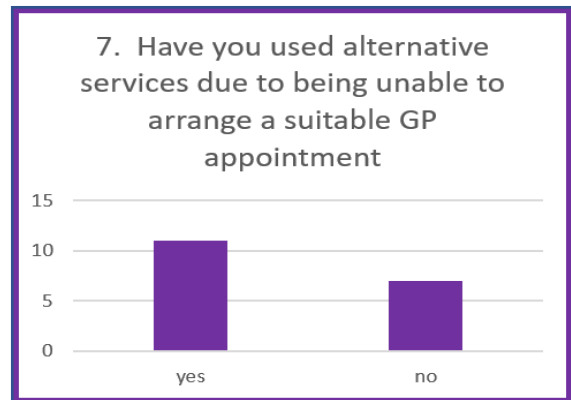
Just over half of people said options of seeing other health professionals were not offered, although one commented *“no, but usually offered if I can’t get in with doctor”*

One person said they had been offered option of seeing the nurse and one mental health professionals.

7. Alternative Services

We asked “Have you used alternative services due to being unable to arrange a suitable GP appointment i.e. 111, Pharmacy, A & E”

Just over half of people said they had used alternative services with one clarifying that they had used a pharmacy.



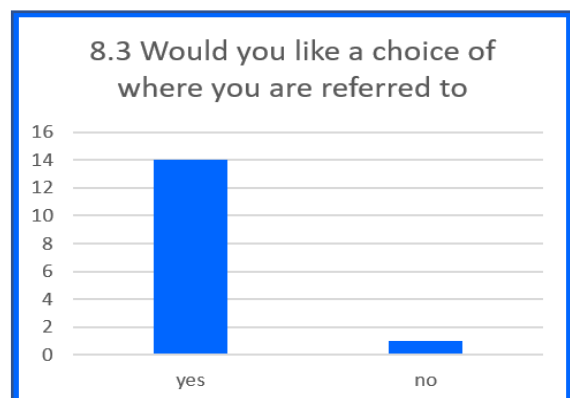
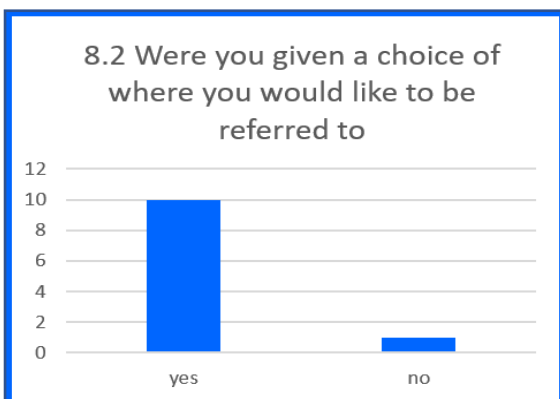
8. Referrals

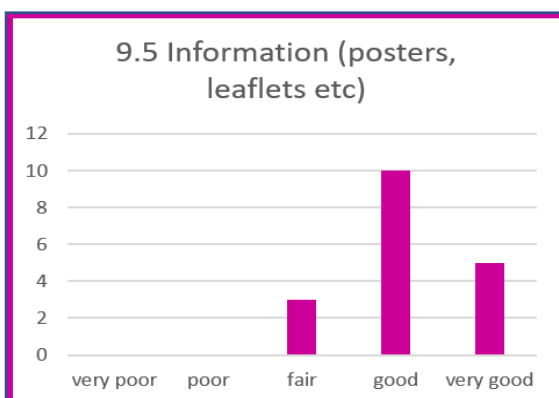
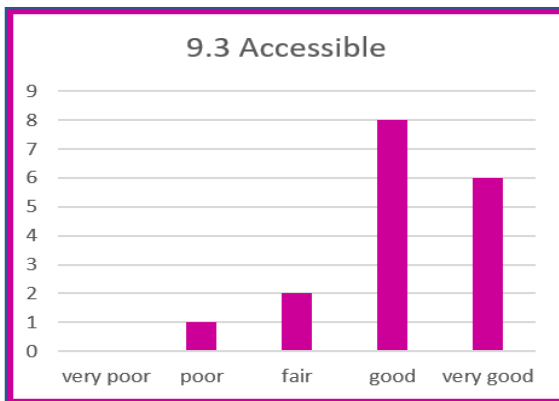
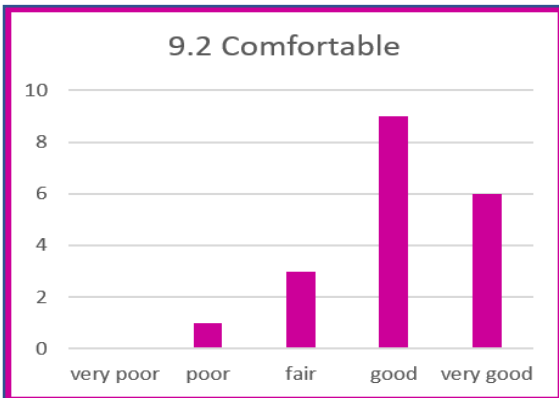
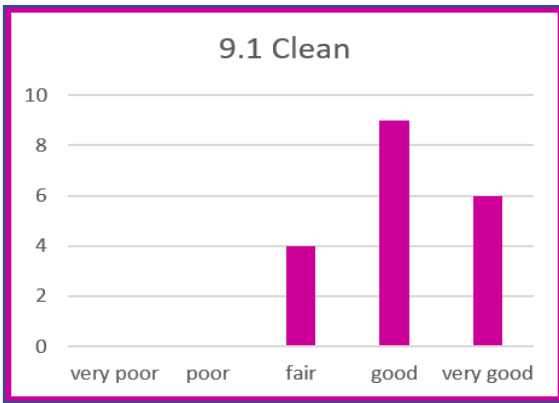
We asked people “Have you ever has a referral to another NHS service from your GP (8.1), were you given a choice of where you would like to be referred to (8.2) and would you like a choice of where you are referred to (8.3)”

Over half the patients said they had had a referred to another NHS service with nearly all of them saying that they were given a choice of where they would like to be referred to.

The majority of people said that they would like to be offered a choice on where they are referred to.

“(You want) the best you can get!”





9. Rating the waiting area and facilities

We asked people how they rated the waiting area and facilities on the following points:

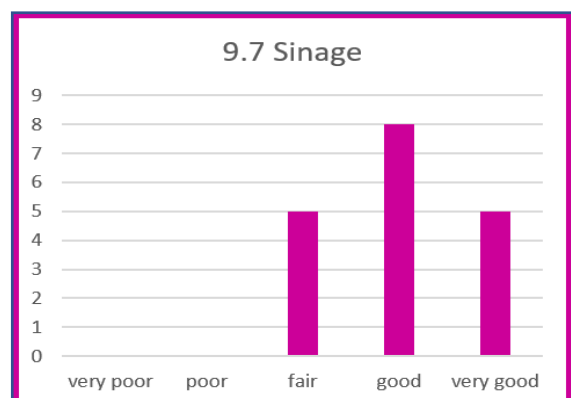
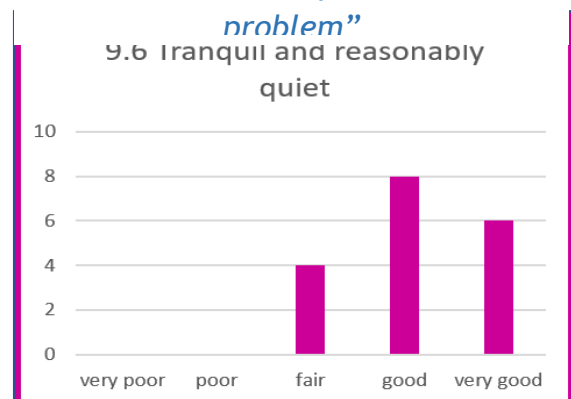
1. Clean
2. Comfortable
3. Accessible
4. Cleanliness of toilets
5. Information (posters, leaflets, etc.)
6. Tranquil and reasonably quiet
7. Signage

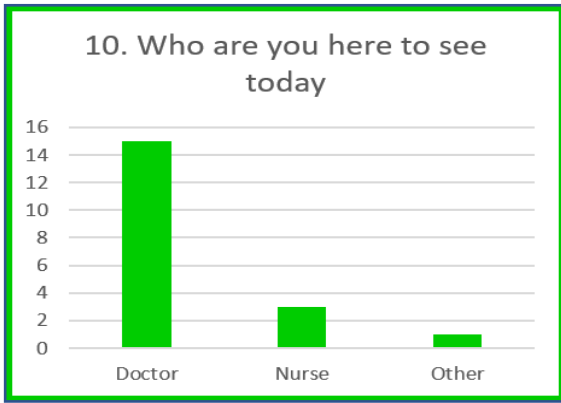
There were hardly any negatives, just one on comfort and one on accessible. A very large majority of people gave ratings of good or very good across all points.

“Don’t know about the toilets - not keen on the music though!”

“There is a ramp - can’t get upstairs, no lift”

“Accessible - upstairs is a problem”





10. We asked “Who are you here to see today?”

Three-quarters of people were seeing a doctor, with most of the remainder seeing the nurse, with one saying *“phlebotomist - nice lady - seen early”*

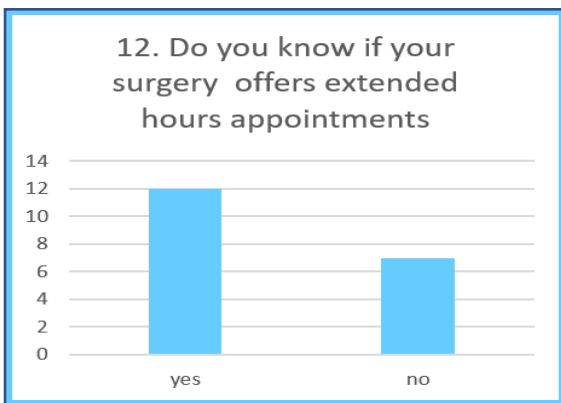
11. We asked “How long past your appointment time have you been waiting”

Two people were seen early or within a few minutes, with just over half seen within 6 - 20 minutes. 4 people said that they had waited over 20 minutes.

“usually good, 45 minutes on one occasion”



“checked in - running 16 minutes late”



12. We asked “Do you know if your surgery offers extended hours appointment?”

Just over half of people knew about extended hours, with one saying that they had *“attended twice”*.

One person said *“yes, but not sure what they are”*

13. We asked “how do you rate the doctors on the following - Friendliness (13.1) and Helpfulness (13.2)?”

Doctors were well rated, with the vast majority rating them as good or very good.

“Some doctors are very good, friendly and helpful. I feel the problem is getting an appointment at reception. Staff are unhelpful and rude.”

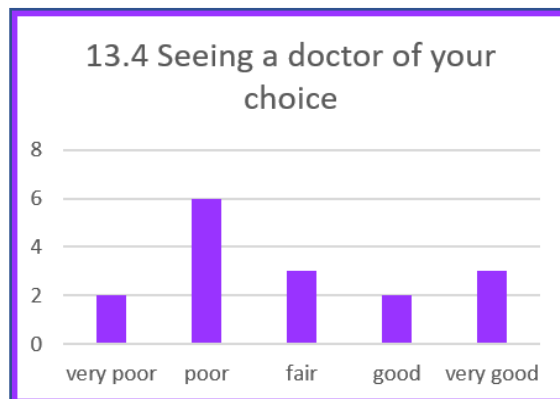


13. “How do you rate the doctors on the following - Informative (13.3) and Seeing a doctor of your choice (13.4)?”

Doctors were rated well on being informative, bit half the people poor or very poor for seeing the doctor of your choice.

“Hard to see my doctor on request, but easy if request female only doctor”

“Difficult (to see a doctor of your choice)”

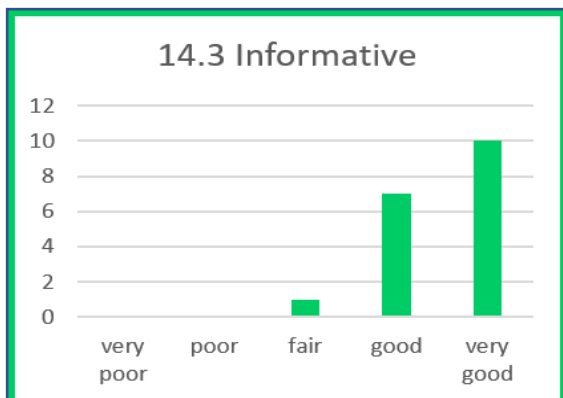
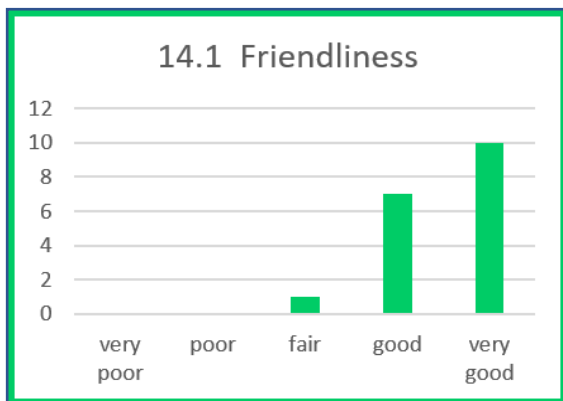


14. We asked “How do you rate the nurses on the following?”

14.1 Friendliness

14.2 Helpfulness

14.3 Informative



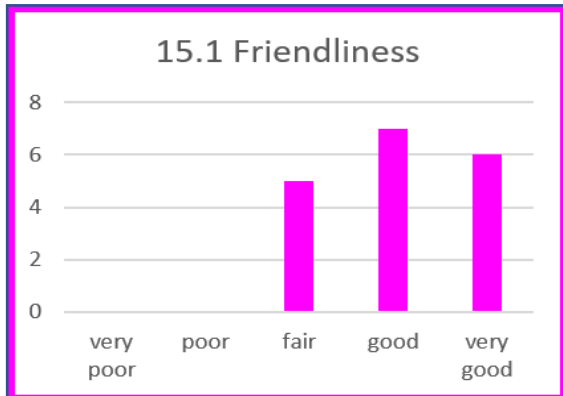
There were no negatives regarding the nurses with the vast majority of people rating them as good or very good. Half the people said they were “very good”.

15. We asked “How do you rate other healthcare staff on the following?”

15.1 Friendliness

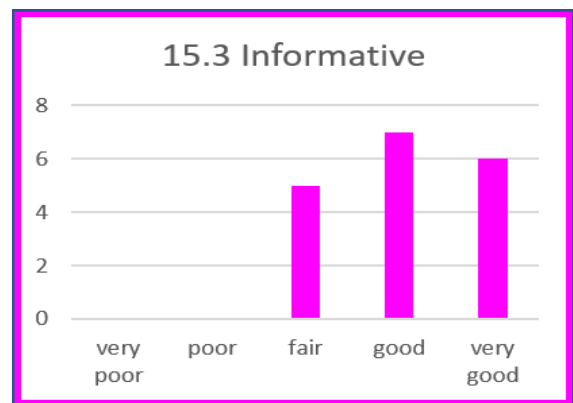
15.2 Helpfulness

15.3 Informative



The vast majority of people gave a rating for fair, good and very good for being friendly and informative.

All bar one, gave ratings of good or very good for helpfulness.

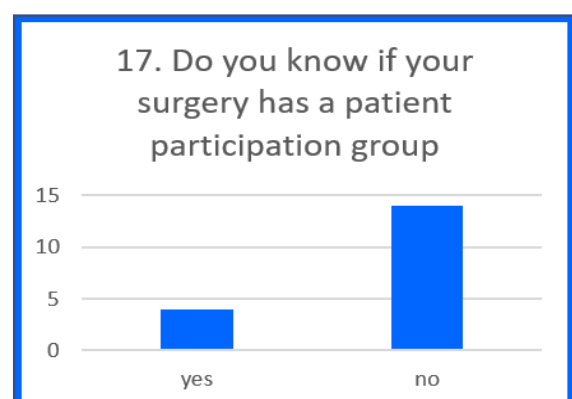


16. We asked people “Do you know how to make a compliment or raise a complaint about your GP surgery?”

Just over half of people said that they did not know how to raise a complaint about the GP Surgery.

17. We asked people “Do you know if your surgery has a patient participation group?”

Approximately three-quarters of people did not know if the surgery had a Patient Participation Group.





18. We asked “What was the overall experience of your visit today?”

Three-quarters of people said that their overall experience of their visit was good or very good, with only two people saying it was poor.

“Today I was lucky - seen a very good and helpful doctor”

“Everyone excellent”

Additional comments made by patients:

“I called in to get an emergency appointment and am satisfied that I got an appointment.”

“Good practice, staff helpful. Although I usually see different doctors they are usually helpful and friendly. Practice is overstretched as are all. Would be nice to be able to book an appointment for a few days time rather than weeks away.”

*“The telephone system is ****. We had a questionnaire for the new telephone system. (They) never published the results, only a notice stating they are working with B.T. to make it better.”*

“I find doctors helpful, but some of the reception staff are rude and very unhelpful when trying to make appointments.”

“I feel all doctors surgeries are under too much pressure - too many patients - too few staff.”

“Telephone answering is appalling, estimated time of waiting can be 20 - 45 minutes, then cut off when they answer your turn. If you need an appointment within an acceptable time you need to wait outside for surgery to open at 8 a.m. that day otherwise telephone booking is appalling.”

Summary, Comments and Further Observations

Healthwatch were made to feel very welcome on the day of our visit and we would like to thank the staff and Practice Manager for their time and courtesy.

The Surgery is in a very old large house which offers many challenges as well as copious amounts of space and available rooms.

The Practice has a very friendly, welcoming feel as you enter, and plenty of comfortable seating to sit and wait. There are some issues, with some being due to the building, i.e. having no lift and some of which will hopefully be addressed going forward, primarily the phone system.

We spoke to 20 patients who kindly completed a questionnaire, the results of which are shown.

There are also possibly opportunities - new media screens, improved triage, making more use of display boards for patient information and increasing the Reception staff knowledge of Care Navigation.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Action

- Exterior signage could be improved as the surgery is not identifiable until you are standing in front of the building.
- The disabled access is not particularly visible if approaching from the car park direction due to a large bush and lack of signage.
- The terminal screens (when working) could be cleaned more frequently than once per day, particularly at the current time with concerns about Coronavirus.
- There are no alternative chair types, ie with arms or bariatric and it would be advisable to try to expand that range of seating options.
- Important specific information could be repeated in each of the 5 waiting areas.
- Increase information about local mental health support could be provided and look at opportunities for 'themed' boards to build on those already offered.
- Ensure all reception staff are fully trained in Care Navigation, as a safeguard in case the Triage system gets delayed.
- Increase the PPG information both within the Practice and online.
- Provide visible information about how to make a complaint.

The survey results and recommendations:

Most of the survey questions received a positive response from the patients. There were however some exceptions, mainly around the difficulty in arranging appointments and the inadequacy of the way that telephone calls are dealt with.

It is clear that surgery are aware of some of the problems with the telephone system and one patient advised Healthwatch about the surgery surveying patients regarding the system. It is imperative that improvements and solutions are found, whether it is a technical issue with hardware systems or problems with dealing with the number of calls at peak times.

As we were advised that people can call at any time during opening hours to make appointments, perhaps this could be highlighted to patients, possibly with an information sheet and posters, as this could relieve some pressure of the amount of calls first thing in the morning. If more routine appointments could be made without patients have to wait for too many weeks, some would perhaps not feel the need to call at 8 a.m. and queue to get a same day appointment. Although this may not provide a solution immediately, a concerted effort over a period of time may reduce some of the peak time pressures which could be beneficial to both patients and staff.

Provider Feedback

Healthwatch Staffordshire received the following feedback from the Assistant Manager of Laurel House.

“Thank you for the report and the content is fair & encouraging and some very positive comments that I will share with the team.

I did briefly discuss with your team on the day of their visit some of the points that you have raised in the survey results - those mainly regarding the telephone system and how appointments are made. We are currently awaiting the telephone provider to change the call flow as this will improve access and encourage patients to ring for certain services at specific times throughout the day so to avoid peak times whenever possible. We were also slowly in the process of introducing a clinical triage system and we have recently recruited new clinicians for this purpose so hopefully this will provide a robust, urgent, acute service everyday.

Exterior signage for the disabled access was suggested and I will sort this as soon as we are back to normal business as we feel this will be beneficial. The check-in screens were already ordered and we awaiting those from the CCG as they are providing those for us. I also have noted the suggestion for a chair that is higher, for those patients that struggle with mobility. I will discuss this with the Nursing manager.

Most of our team are new members of staff and we are slowly rolling out care navigation training for all.

I hope that I have briefly acknowledged some of the points in the report and thank you to your team for taking the time to come along and visit us at Laurel House Surgery.”

DISCLAIMER

Please note that this report only relates to findings we observe on the specific date of our visit. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all residents and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.



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