

Healthwatch Greenwich Enter and View report

GP Practice: Plumstead Health Centre

Date: Tuesday 16th February 2016, 9:30am-12:30pm

Authorised representatives: Sharon Legae and Clive Mardner

This report is a summary of the Enter and View visit conducted by two Healthwatch Greenwich authorised representatives at Plumstead Health Centre on 16th February 2016.

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.
- To identify areas for improvement

Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View visit and a copy of the prompt sheet outlining the topics we would be asking patients about had been sent to the Practice Manager prior to the visit. Upon arrival, the Healthwatch Greenwich Enter and View authorised representatives met with Lorraine Fitch, the Practice Manager, for a short and informal introductory meeting.

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. We spoke to 12 people for around ten minutes each, which allowed enough time to get a good understanding of all aspects of their experience.

Results

Appointments

Only one person we spoke to had booked their appointment online, everybody else had made their appointment by phone. Most people said that they preferred to book by phone, although one person wanted to be able to book online and was not aware they were able to do so.

At Plumstead Health Centre four appointments in the morning and two in the evening are able to be booked in advance. There are some additional slots available for online booking and two appointments available at the end of the day for people who work during the day but the rest of the appointments are made by phoning the surgery on the day for either the morning or the afternoon session. Most patients we spoke to felt this system worked well and they were able to get an appointment for when they wanted it most of the time. However, some patients told us that these appointment slots ran out quickly and they had to make sure they rang early enough to secure an appointment. They believed there needed to be more appointments available, particularly appointments that can be booked in advance.

Opening hours

Some patients were happy with the opening hours of the practice as they were retired and so able to attend at any time of the day. Lots of people we spoke to would like the practice to be open on a Saturday so they can access their own GP rather than attend a walk-in centre. Those who worked wanted to be able to attend appointments earlier or later than the surgery is currently open. One person we spoke to had made use of the appointments available at the end of the day for workers and at the later appointments on a Friday evening, however other people were not aware that appointments were available at these times.

Access and giving feedback

Nobody we spoke to had experienced any difficulties when accessing the practice. One patient told us that even though there was a small language barrier, the doctor always takes the time to clearly explain things so there was no need to use

an interpreting service. Only one person we spoke to was aware of the Patient Participation Group, although they were not a member.

Qualitative feedback

When we asked people what changes could be made to make it easier to see a GP, most of the comments were similar to what has already been discussed regarding appointments. A suggestion was made that the practice could have a waiting list for appointments and so if one is cancelled, it is given to somebody on the waiting list. Another patient told us that it was annoying to have to keep coming to the surgery to drop in their repeat prescription - they were not aware that they could do this online.

Most of the other feedback we received was in praise of the surgery and the staff. One patient told us that 'everyone is very good, there is an excellent service.' The reception staff were described as 'polite and having good communication skills' and patients also told us that they felt well taken care of by the doctors, who are helpful, supportive and explain things well.

Additional comments and observations by Healthwatch Greenwich

The building and waiting room is shared by two GP surgeries, who have started a consultation about merging to become one. Healthwatch Greenwich representatives observed that the patients from Plumstead Health Centre were seen quickly.

It was noted that patients were greeted in a friendly and welcoming manner at the Reception desk and were seen straight away upon arrival. There was a good range of information available around the reception area as well as on the electronic display system. The electronic display system is also used to inform patients when clinical staff are ready to see them, the patient's name is displayed after a loud beep noise to alert them. One representative queried how this would work for partially sighted patients and the practice manager informed them that the receptionists are aware of patients who are partially sighted as it will be recorded on their notes and a receptionist will help escort them to the room at the correct time.

Generally the practice was clean and tidy, although it was noted that the female toilets were not as clean as they could be. Our representative asked whether there was drinking water available for patients and the practice manager said that although there was no public water dispenser, patients can ask at reception if they need a drink, although not all patients may be aware of this.

Recommendations

Our recommendations focus on informing patients of certain aspects of the services which are available at the practice. Although there is lots of relevant information displayed, it does not seem that patients are taking it all in, particularly patients who might not attend the surgery on a regular basis.

The practice needs to consider how they can actively engage with patients about joining the Patient Participation Group, and how they are raising awareness of the online facilities that are available to book appointments and order repeat prescriptions, and ensuring all patients are aware that there are appointments available in the evening.

Conclusion

Healthwatch Greenwich were left with a positive view of the practice, the patients seem very happy with the care they are receiving and they are able to get an appointment in a timely manner most of the time. Many of the comments we received regarding appointments were around extending opening hours and increasing online services, which are already offered by the practice and of which patient are unaware, which is reflected in our recommendations. It was really encouraging to hear that doctors take time to explain things so patients can be fully engaged and informed about their care.

Response from Plumstead Health Centre

The practice found this report fair and accurate. The recommendations of Healthwatch Greenwich mirror aspects of our action plan for 2016/17 which was produced in collaboration with our Patient Participation Group.

It is our intention to promote the online service, using display information and the services of our reception staff. The reception team remit is to proactively inform patients of the online service over the telephone and at the desk. Those wishing to participate in the service will be asked to complete a short form and provide two proofs of ID. Passwords will be issued immediately and the patient will be able to sign up to the network on the same day. The process takes less than 10 minutes.

Staff are trained to advise patients requiring later appointments, of the workers 'slots which include the late night Friday, and frequently ask when making bookings, whether the patient needs a worker's appointment. Appointments can be made up to four weeks in advance.

Since their inception the Patient Participation Group and the practice have been aware that the group should be representative of the patient list. We have sought a number of ways of engaging patients: display boards and leaflets: via the reception team and with the Patient Participation Group themselves attending a flu clinic to speak to other patients.

Lorraine Fitch
Practice Manager

Contact details

For more information on this report please contact:

Healthwatch Greenwich
Gunnery House
9-11 Gunnery Terrace
Woolwich
London
SE18 6SW

Telephone: 020 8301 8340

Email: info@healthwatchgreenwich.co.uk