

Healthwatch Greenwich Enter and View report

GP Practice: Eltham Palace Surgery

Date: Wednesday 20th January 2016, 9am-11am

Authorised representatives: Jade Landers and Clive Mardner

This report is a summary of the Enter and View visit conducted by two Healthwatch Greenwich authorised representatives at Eltham Palace Surgery on 20th January 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 wanted to speak to 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 Johanna Gilby, 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 13 people for around ten minutes each, which allowed enough time to get a good understanding of all aspects of their experience.

Results

Appointments

Most of the people we spoke to booked their appointment by phone, which was their preferred option. There were mixed opinions on the telephone booking system, many patients were happy but there were a number of comments that there were long queues and that they often had to wait on the phone for a long time. One person told us they now come to the surgery in person to make an appointment as they found it difficult to get through on the phone.

Patients told us that if they wanted to see a particular doctor for a routine appointment it could take two or three weeks before the next available appointment. Seeing the same doctor or nurse is very important to some patients. However, they also said they were able to get an appointment in an emergency even if it is not with their preferred doctor and that children are always prioritised. There was some feedback from patients that they were concerned about who makes the judgement on what requires an emergency appointment - a receptionist or a nurse?

Opening hours

Very few of the patients knew what the opening hours of the GP Practice were - most people we spoke to said they would like to see the GP early in the morning or in the evenings but were not aware the practice already offered appointments at these times. Many of the patients would like the practice to be open on a Saturday so they can access their own GP at a weekend.

Access and giving feedback

Only one person we spoke to was aware of the Patient Participation Group and no one we spoke to had used the interpreting service or had any issues physically accessing the surgery.

Qualitative feedback

Most of the comments we had were about the number of clinical staff at the surgery, patients felt there were not enough doctors or nurses. Patients were complimentary about the new building, Eltham Community Hospital, and that they were able to access the other services there such as the phlebotomy service.

One patient commented that the receptionists are 'kind and helpful when they answer the phone' but other patients felt uncomfortable with having to tell receptionists their medical problems when booking the appointments. Most patients praised the clinical staff for their attitudes and there were number of positive comments specifically praising Dr Peters.

Additional comments and observations by Healthwatch Greenwich

The GP Practice is situated within the new Eltham Community Hospital and so the décor is very fresh and up to date. The waiting room is spacious and there are plenty of chairs although this space is underused as there is another waiting area (the GP sub-wait) which both GP Practices prefer to use. There are two GP Practices situated within the hospital and the receptions are next to one another. The different GP receptions have good signage to distinguish between the practices. The other GP Practice had a list of all their staff whereas the Eltham Palace surgery only listed the doctors. The representatives pointed this out to the Practice Manger and suggested the names of all staff be listed at the reception so the patient is aware who their appointment is with rather than just 'the nurse' for example. We received an email the same afternoon from the Practice Manager telling us that the recommendation had been acted upon and the names of the rest of the clinical staff had been added to the list.

There was a good range of information displayed at the Reception desk including the practice leaflet and information about repeat prescriptions and online services. In the waiting room, there is one noticeboard available for each of the surgeries that contains further information. It needs to be clearer which noticeboard is for which surgery and there is not enough room for other useful information to be included such as for local public health initiatives. This was raised with the Practice Manager who accepted that there was not enough space but they were not allowed to add anything such as posters or leaflet racks to the walls due to restrictions on the building.

There are three reception staff working at any one time, one member of staff at the reception desk who welcomes patients, books them into their appointments and deals with any face-to-face enquires, and there are two members of staff in a separate room who answer the phones. This is good for patient confidentiality as it means patients at the reception desk cannot hear when the receptionist is on the phone to another patient. However, at times the reception desk got quite busy and queues began to form when the member of staff had to deal with more complicated issues rather than just checking people in for an appointment.

Recommendations

Patients told us that they sometimes found it difficult to get through the surgery on the telephone, and that is an issue Healthwatch Greenwich also had when trying to contact the surgery to arrange the visit. We would recommend that the practice looks at the current system and how they can make it easier for patients to contact the practice by telephone.

Patients should be able to access more information related to their health and wellbeing than is currently available, although we understand there have been restrictions placed on where information can be displayed. The practice should consider alternative options such as freestanding leaflet racks if they cannot utilise the wall space.

Although the opening hours are advertised on the website and on the patient leaflet, many patients are still not aware of what they are. The practice team should consider how they can make people aware of the opening hours.

The Practice should work on raising awareness of the Patient Participant Group and ensure all patients feel welcome to join and give their feedback.

Conclusion

Most of the patients we spoke to seemed to have a positive view of their experience at the surgery and the staff. There have been steps taken to improve confidentiality for patients by moving two of the receptionists who are responsible for answering the phones into a room separate from the reception desk. However, there does still seem to be difficulty getting through to the practice by phone which is reflected in our recommendations. We would like to thank the practice for being so welcoming to our representatives and taking on board some of our recommendations so swiftly after the visit.

Response from Eltham Palace Surgery

Dear Healthwatch Greenwich Team

Thank you for carrying out your visit on 21.1.2016 at our surgery and we would like to say that we found your report very fair and accurate.

Telephone access

We are sorry that some patients are still having difficulty getting through on the telephone as we have tried very hard to rectify this.

We had problems with telephone access at our old premises but upon moving into the new purpose built hospital we had a complete new telephony system installed which was to hopefully alleviate these problems.

We also had a complete change of staff rotas so as we now have an appointment line and a separate enquiry line which is staffed constantly and a 3rd line available to be answered at the busiest times of the day 8-11 am 4-6 pm.

We will be speaking to our phone company again to see if there is anything else that can be done.

We encourage our patients to sign up for on line a service which allows them to book appointments on line and order repeat prescriptions. We have increased our

on- line appointment availability since your visit to enable patients to book GP appointments so they do not necessarily need to call the surgery at peak times.

Information leaflets

As mentioned in your report and we do also agree more information leaflets should be made available and we are in discussions with the landlords of the hospital to allow us to have another large display notice board put up in the GP sub-wait area.

Failing this we will see if we are allowed to have a freestanding leaflet display also in the GP sub wait area or a smaller freestanding display stand on the front reception desk area.

Opening hours

We do have a display notice on front reception advising patients of our opening hours along with this information being on our website, Practice leaflets and Choices website.

PPG

We have always encouraged our patients to sign up to our PPG and we are signing up patients on a regular basis.

We advertise this on front reception, in our practice leaflet and on our website.

We would also like to finally add that due to some technical problems our check in machines are still not up and running but should be soon and this will hopefully reduce any queues at the front desk

Thank you
Kindest regards

Jo Gilby
Practice Manager

Contact details

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