

# Albany House Medical Centre

## Patient Survey Report

### 1. Introduction

In November 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Albany House Medical Centre in Wellingborough as part of a county-wide survey of GP practices. The survey aimed to find out about access to services, the patient experience, good practice and what pressures there are within the practice. A summary report of the findings from the county-wide survey, including good practice and recommendations, is available on our website<sup>1</sup>.

We spoke to 14 patients at Albany House Medical Centre about their views, experiences and satisfaction. By speaking to patients face to face we could add depth to the findings of the National GP Patient Survey<sup>2</sup>. We also spoke to the practice manager to find out about services currently being provided, how they are accessed, what they felt worked well and what pressures there were. The questions used are in Appendix 1 and 2.

All information and figures quoted below were correct at the time of the site visit. This report does not reflect any changes or improvements to procedures since that date.

### 2. Practice information

#### 2.1 Practice size and staffing

Albany House Medical Centre is a large practice (approximately 16,700 patients) with eight doctors, plus registrars, six practice nurses, one nurse practitioner, three health care assistants and a practice counsellor. It operates at a main site in Wellingborough and a smaller facility in Wollaston.

#### 2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including ante natal clinics, smoking cessation, diabetes, well women clinics, birth control, family planning and phlebotomy.

**Specialists:** The practice employs a practice counsellor for depression. Other mental health conditions are referred on to Northamptonshire Healthcare. The surgery also provides its own phlebotomy service.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/about/docs](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/about/docs)

<sup>2</sup> <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

**Shared services:** Carpal tunnel surgery, aural surgery and advanced minor surgery within the practice and these services are provided for other practices across the county.

**Extended opening:** The practice also opens on Saturdays from 8.30am to 12pm.

**Home visits:** GPs visit patients at home between surgeries - usually 12pm to 2pm.

### **2.3 Appointment booking system**

Appointments can be booked by telephone from 8.30am, in person and online. Appointments can be pre-booked for the next day or the day after and up to a week ahead.

#### ***Missed appointments***

The practice has a low number of patients who do not attend their booked appointments (Do Not Attends, DNAs).

### **2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)**

Healthwatch volunteers met with two members of the PPG. It meets every four to six weeks according to need, with the practice business manager taking notes, and has joined the National Association of Patient Participation (NAPP) to provide information and connection with other patient organisations. There is a balance of male and female members but they would like some younger people to join - a recruitment campaign took place recently. The PPG has undertaken a questionnaire about the appointment system and as a result had reduced the wait for appointments. Although calls can be made from 8.30am appointments are staggered across the day. There is also a 'duty doctor' available each day. Plans for the future of the practice are discussed in group meetings and a "suggestions" box has been suggested to be placed in waiting rooms.

### **2.5 Complaints system**

There is a leaflet in the main entrance to the surgery and information on the website. All complaints are taken seriously and after discussion patients are invited into the surgery to speak with the GPs, Practice Manager or others involved. The practice tries to make the process person-centred and a written apology is sent where appropriate. Patients are always informed about actions taken.

### **2.6 Equality and Diversity**

We asked the practice about their equality and diversity policy and how the practice met additional needs of patients. The following were mentioned:

- Wheelchair access is good - a lift for upstairs appointments.
- Equipment for visual impairment and hearing loops at both surgeries.
- A lift between floors.
- One patient has undertaken an access audit at Wollaston and is going to do one at Wellingborough.

- The surgery uses an interpretation service, which can result in patients waiting to be seen.
- Prioritising patient care over running times.

### **3. Patient experience**

#### **3.1 Appointment system**

Most of the patients we spoke to found it easy (four) or very easy (five) to get an appointment when they needed one. Two people described it as 'OK' and three said it was difficult.

Most positive or satisfactory experiences of getting an appointment mentioned appointment availability. For example:

- One patient thought that it was easy to get appointments for younger children (although thought it was harder to book emergency appointments for older children and adults).
- Most patients explained that on this specific day, getting follow-up, same-day and general non-emergency appointments was relatively easy, although this was not always the case.

Negative points included:

- Some patients felt it was difficult to convince the receptionists that their issues were emergencies or that they needed to be seen on the same day.
- One of the patients did not like explaining their personal details to a receptionist.
- Another patient said they would like to see the practice offer evening and weekend appointments.
- One patient thought the practice needed more flexibility as they have to book appointments around working hours and sometimes having to wait considerable amounts of time to speak to someone on the phone.

#### **3.2 Choice of doctor**

Most patients did not usually get to see the doctor of their choice, but it did not matter to them (nine out of fourteen). Three patients said they would prefer to see a doctor of their choice, but did not get the opportunity.

- Two patients would prefer to see the same doctor for continuity of care.
- One patient wanted to see a female professional when needing to go to a doctor for female-related problems.
- Three patients were happy to see any doctor, as long as they are seen/they were good.
- One patient did not mind about seeing any doctor to get different opinions.

### **3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service**

All the patients who responded said they were usually (four) or always (five) satisfied with the treatment and service they received. When asked to tell us more:

- One person said the doctors explained everything and the nurses were friendly.
- One person said that some doctors did not listen when discussing medication they felt did not agree with them.
- One person had to have a second new birth check after finding out that the first doctor was not trained to carry out the procedure.

We asked people what they thought could improve the quality of care. Seven people commented:

- One person mentioned long waiting times for appointments once at the surgery.
- One person would like longer appointments with the GP.
- One person thought that receptionists should be aware of GP's competencies so they could book the right doctor for a patient.
- One person suggested improving the automated book-in system.
- One person would like the surgery to hold a stock of blood pressure monitor batteries.

We also asked people what works well. Eight people gave the following answers:

- Five people thought the automated system at the surgery worked.
- Three people praised the caring and friendly staff.
- One person liked being able to make a late evening appointment.

### **3.4 Communication and additional needs**

None of the patients we spoke to said they had any problems communicating with staff or doctors. Seven people made additional comments.

- Four people described staff and doctors as polite, helpful nice, or very good.
- One person explained that they had a speech disorder and became anxious, and whilst most doctors were very understanding some lost patience.
- One person said that their doctor would not diagnose their condition without a second opinion.
- One person said that as their first language is not English they preferred to attend with their spouse.

We also asked if any of the patients had any additional needs that required support (such as hearing or visual impairment, learning or physical disabilities, English as a

second language) and whether their needs were met. One of the patients we spoke to had additional needs and said that these were being met.

### **3.5 Additional comments**

We asked patients if they had any other comments to make about the practice. There were four additional positive comments and three additional negative comments.

#### ***Positive:***

- Two people described the service as good.
- One person said that they never had any problems.
- One person thought that the midwife clinic was good.

#### ***Negative:***

- Two people expressed concerns around waiting times.
- One person did not think there were as many doctors available and that more GP appointments.

We also asked the Practice Manager if they were any more issues, pressures or examples of good practice that they wanted to tell us about:

#### ***Issues/pressures***

- There is concern over the lack of resources limiting choice of GP and the number of appointments, and also continuous changes being imposed from above.
- Although the practice has expertise in Cardiology, Dermatology and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT), the practice manager would like to have more specialist GPs.

#### ***What works well?***

- Services for diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), cholesterol and blood pressure are meeting targets and working well.
- The practice manager thought that the clinical and administrative staff were good and described the facilities as adequate.
- Summary care records are being made available to patients and the practice uses innovative technology.

## **4. Highlights**

According to the results of both our patient survey and the National GP Patient Survey the practice's appointment booking system is relatively easy to use but, according to patients that is not always the case. All the patients were usually satisfied with their treatment.

## **5. Recommendations**

1. The practice could look at ways to improve the ability of patients to see their doctor of choice for continuity of care.
2. Further extending opening hours in the evenings may improve access for some patients.
3. Patients may benefit from a booking system that allows them to book appointments more than a week in advance.
4. We carried out deaf access mystery shopping at 5 of the 25 practices we visited across the county and have found the access and provisions for deaf and hard of hearing patients could be improved. Whilst we did not specifically assess this practice for deaf awareness and access we recommend that the practice carries out a self-assessment of their deaf access and shares the findings with Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Deafconnect with a view to improving deaf access and awareness.

## **6. Thanks and acknowledgements**

Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank the Practice Manager of Albany House Medical Centre for taking the time to talk to us and facilitate our visit, all the patients who were willing to take part in our survey and the Healthwatch Northamptonshire volunteers who visited the practice.

## Appendix 1 - Patient survey questions

<b>Q1: How easy is it to get an appointment when you need it? (Please tick one)</b> Very easy                      Easy                      OK                      Difficult                      Very difficult <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Q2: Please tell us more about your experiences of getting an appointment, including how it is easy or difficult, how long you have to wait to get an appointment, and whether the system works well for you:</b>				
<b>Q3: Do you usually get to see the doctor/nurse/health professional of your choice?</b> Yes                      No, but I'd like to                      No, but it doesn't matter to me <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Please tell us more about how this is important to you or not:</b>				
<b>Q4: Are there any problems when communicating with staff or doctors?</b> Yes                      No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Please tell us more:</b>				
<b>Q5: Are you satisfied with the treatment and service you receive here?</b> Yes, always                      Yes, usually                      No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Please tell us more:</b>				
<b>Q6: What do you think could improve the patient experience at your GP practice and what do you think works particularly well?</b> <b>Improvements:</b> <b>Works well:</b>				
<b>Q7: Do you have any additional needs that require support? Such as hearing or visual impairment, learning or physical disabilities, English as a second language, etc.</b> Yes                      No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>If so, are they met?</b> Yes                      No                      Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Please tell us more:</b>				
<b>Q8: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?</b>				

## Appendix 2 - Practice Manager survey questions

<p><b>Q1: What is the staff makeup of the surgery (+ see briefing)? Do you have any nurse practitioners / prescribers and do you provide a mental health service? E.g. Have there been any changes to the surgery staff since the briefing? What are they? E.g. Which staff provide mental health care and advice?</b></p>
<p><b>Q2: Have you any GP or staff vacancies? How long have these posts been vacant?</b></p>
<p><b>Q3: How does your appointment booking system work? (only need to ask about what is different to the briefing)</b>  <i>E.g. the role of the receptionist, whether there is online booking, how far in advance patients can book appointments, how much choice patients have over time and GP, whether they use an 0845 number, how many phone lines they have, telephone triage? What do you do with temporary or unregistered patients?</i>  <b>Have any significant patient criticisms of the appointment system been reported by the PPG and how have these been addressed?</b></p>
<p><b>Q4: Does the practice conduct home visits?</b>  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>How are these organised?</b></p>
<p><b>Q5: What additional facilities does the practice have? (only need to ask about what is different to the briefing) (E.g. specialist clinics, counsellors, blood tests, specialist doctors, dressing changing facilities, drop in sessions)</b>  <b>Do you share facilities with any other GP practices in your locality? Or does your practice or GP cluster have any specialisms/clinics or specialist doctors?</b>  <b>If so, what and is this working? Would you like to see any more?</b>  <b>Is there anything else working well in your locality? Are there any plans for further sharing of resources?</b></p>
<p><b>Q6: Does your practice have any extended opening hours or do you plan to (if not mentioned in briefing)? Has this been requested by your PPG?</b></p>
<p><b>Q7: Is the 111 Service prominently advertised by the Practice and does the service provide adequately for your patients and for their out of hours requirements? (Also see PPG and Patient Surveys and Reports)</b></p>
<p><b>Q8: Do you have an active patient engagement group? How is advertised and how can people join? Is it funded by the practice and how often do they meet? (Other than what is mentioned in the briefing)</b></p>
<p><b>Q9: Where is your complaints system publically displayed?</b>  <i>E.g. Is it in the patient information leaflet, noticeboard, reception desk?</i>  <b>How are complaints dealt with?</b></p>
<p><b>Q10. How else do you communicate with patients?</b>  <i>E.g. noticeboards, leaflets, website, guidelines about best times to call</i></p>
<p><b>Q11: What is your equality and diversity policy? How is it implemented? E.g. How provide access for those with physical, visual, hearing, and/or learning disabilities and autism and non-English speakers. BSL/interpreters? Is there staff training or understanding of obligations?</b></p>
<p><b>Q12: What other staff training does your practice have?</b>  <i>What decision aids/training are receptionists given?</i></p>
<p><b>Q13. Are there more patients attending your practice than there used to be? Have you any thoughts on why that is or why there is pressure on GP practices?</b></p>
<p><b>Q14: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about? E.g. things that are working well, challenges the practice faces, additional support needs they have, thoughts about A&amp;E attendance, etc.</b></p>