

Rothwell and Desborough Healthcare Group Patient Survey Report

1. Introduction

In December 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited the Desborough Surgery of the Rothwell and Desborough Healthcare Group 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 website¹.

We spoke to eight patients at Desborough Surgery 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 Survey². 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

Rothwell and Desborough Healthcare Group is a large practice (approximately 20,500 patients across both surgeries) with nine doctors (two female, seven male), four practice nurses and two nurse practitioners and four health care assistants.

A new GP was to be appointed in February 2015. The practice was looking to employ three more GPs and a nurse manager. There were also discussions of plans for the practice to develop into a teaching practice for January 2015 and hopes for registrars to take up posts when they were fully qualified.

2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including child health surveillance, phlebotomy, minor operations, cervical smears, immunisation and vaccination, podiatry (chiropractic), coronary heart disease prevention, well person checks,

¹ www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/about/docs

² <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

contraception and family planning, health promotion, leg ulcer clinics, respiratory clinics, screening for over 75s, diabetes clinic, smoking cessation, osteoporosis clinics and hormone replacement therapy.

Specialists: The practice employs district nurses, midwives and health visitors based at the Rothwell Surgery. Speech therapy is provided at the practice by the community team.

Shared services: Phlebotomists from Kettering General Hospital (KGH) attend to carry out blood tests.

Extended opening: The surgery opens daily from 8am until 6.30pm. Late evening hours are on alternate Mondays and Thursdays, as well as Saturday mornings.

Home visits: Visits take place on a daily basis between morning and afternoon surgeries. Requests for visits are put on-screen and triaged by the GPs. GPs try to see their patients with long-term conditions and those under palliative care. One doctor is a duty doctor each day and will pick up any emergency visits - these appointments are organised slightly differently to accommodate this.

2.3 Appointment booking system

Appointments can be made on-the-day, over the telephone, in advance or online. Pre-booked appointments may be done for one, two or three weeks in advance. Prescriptions may also be able to be ordered online.

The PPG has raised some concern over access to medical records being available to patients from March 2015 and recently undertook a patient survey constructed by group members, showing patients complained about not getting the appointments they wanted.

Missed appointments

Text reminders are sent about appointments and test results. Patients receive proactive phone calls to remind them about clinics.

2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)

There is an active core group of twelve members who meet monthly, as well as a virtual group contactable via email. An open meeting for both groups was held recently but was poorly attended by members of the virtual group. Members of the PPG have been holding teaching sessions at the library for 'How to use the Surgery Online Facilities'. Members distribute information leaflets to the libraries and other locations.

2.5 Complaints system

There is a practice leaflet named 'How to make a compliment, complaint or suggestion' and the PPG have two noticeboards and a suggestions box. The complaints process is also publicly displayed on NHS Choices and the practice website. Complaints are relayed to the Practice Manager in the first instance. Issues are discussed with colleagues weekly and a particular route to solving the problem is taken depending on each case. A discussion with the patient is set up or

formal letters are distributed. Meetings with a GP can also be arranged if necessary to answer any unanswered questions. Complaints are reviewed monthly and lessons learned from them are noted. Most complaints are successfully dealt with by the Practice Manager.

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:

- hearing loop available
- disabled access and disabled toilets
- increased font size is used on the website and in leaflets
- phone service for language translation - patients sometimes bring in a English-fluent friend to get over the language barrier but this sometimes causes problems if the translator does not have the words for medical terminology

3. Patient experience

3.1 Appointment system

Most patients we spoke to found it difficult (four) to get an appointment when they needed it. One found it very difficult, two found it easy and one patient thought it was 'OK'.

Most positive or satisfactory experiences mentioned how they found the service. For example:

- One patient said it was okay to get an appointment.

The patients who found it difficult mentioned the wait to get an appointment. Other negative points included:

- Three patients found it difficult to get an appointment at Rothwell surgery over the telephone.
- One patient mentioned that it was too expensive to phone Rothwell surgery.
- One patient spoke about how it always seems so busy and could not get an appointment with the doctor they wished to see.
- One patient found it was difficult to get same-day appointments.
- One patient had a six-week wait for a check for a seven week old baby.
- One patient had a three to four day wait for a matter that turned out to be extremely urgent.

3.2 Choice of doctor

Most patients usually did get to see the doctor of their choice (three). Two patients explained they didn't get to, two didn't get to but they would like to, and one patient didn't get to see the doctor of their choice but it didn't matter.

3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service

All the patients we spoke to were satisfied with the treatment they received. Two patients were always satisfied, and another two patients were usually satisfied with their treatment. When asked to tell us more:

- One patient mentioned they were definitely satisfied.
- One patient found that their treatment was ‘usually alright’ but didn’t like telling the receptionist what the problem was.
- One patient said their last appointment was the first for five or six years, and they were quickly dealt with.

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

- Three patients wanted improvements in the appointment system.
- One patient mentioned the practice should take into account people’s working hours when booking patients’ appointments.
- One patient would like to see their own doctor.

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

- One patient was “happy with the quality of care”.
- One patient stated that “when seeing their GP - it all works well”.
- One patient was “always satisfied”.
- One patient said “quality of care good”.
- Another patient found there was “good GP care”.

3.4 Communication and additional needs

None of the patients had any issues with communicating with the doctors or any of the other practice staff. Patients commented that staff were “very polite”, had “very good communication” and “everyone is quite friendly and easy to talk to”.

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. Two of the patients we spoke to had additional needs. Both patients had auditory impairments but reported no problems.

3.5 Additional comments

We asked patients if they had any other comments to make about the practice. There were no additional positive comments and three additional negative comments.

Negative:

- One person outlined that they found the appointment system particularly stressful, especially when ill.

- One person found the receptionists unhelpful and there was a slow telephone response.
- One person said it was difficult to get through via telephone and they have to sometimes drive down to the surgery directly to make an appointment.

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

- Recruitment of GPs was a challenge and the Practice Manager was concerned about the extra stress on the existing GPs and felt the practice was not functioning to the level they would like to due to the GP infrastructure.
- The practice would like to improve services and accommodate other services.
- They would like mental health services to be provided by the NHFT in-house.
- They would like some clarification about the age one is deemed an adult, as there is confusion about criteria for 17/18 year old patients.

4. Highlights

According to the results of both this patient survey and the National GP Patient Survey the practice's many patients have difficulty with the practice's appointment booking system, particularly difficulty in getting appointments and getting through to staff over the telephone. Patients were satisfied with the quality of the treatment and care they received.

5. Recommendations

1. The practice should look at improving the availability of appointments and appointment booking system to ensure patients can get an appointment when they need one, perhaps by using a triage system.
2. Increasing the number of phone lines or number of people answering the phones may improve the patient experience of telephoning the practice.
3. As suggested by the practice, more GPs would ease pressure on the practice.
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 Rothwell and Desborough Healthcare Group 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

Q1: How easy is it to get an appointment when you need it? (Please tick one) Very easy Easy OK Difficult Very difficult <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
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:				
Q3: Do you usually get to see the doctor/nurse/health professional of your choice? Yes No, but I'd like to No, but it doesn't matter to me <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tell us more about how this is important to you or not:				
Q4: Are there any problems when communicating with staff or doctors? Yes No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tell us more:				
Q5: Are you satisfied with the treatment and service you receive here? Yes, always Yes, usually No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tell us more:				
Q6: What do you think could improve the patient experience at your GP practice and what do you think works particularly well? Improvements: Works well:				
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. Yes No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
If so, are they met? Yes No Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please tell us more:				
Q8: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?				

Appendix 2 - Practice Manager survey questions

<p>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?</p>
<p>Q2: Have you any GP or staff vacancies? How long have these posts been vacant?</p>
<p>Q3: How does your appointment booking system work? (only need to ask about what is different to the briefing) <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> Have any significant patient criticisms of the appointment system been reported by the PPG and how have these been addressed?</p>
<p>Q4: Does the practice conduct home visits? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> How are these organised?</p>
<p>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) 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? If so, what and is this working? Would you like to see any more? Is there anything else working well in your locality? Are there any plans for further sharing of resources?</p>
<p>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?</p>
<p>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)</p>
<p>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)</p>
<p>Q9: Where is your complaints system publically displayed? <i>E.g. Is it in the patient information leaflet, noticeboard, reception desk?</i> How are complaints dealt with?</p>
<p>Q10. How else do you communicate with patients? <i>E.g. noticeboards, leaflets, website, guidelines about best times to call</i></p>
<p>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?</p>
<p>Q12: What other staff training does your practice have? <i>What decision aids/training are receptionists given?</i></p>
<p>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?</p>
<p>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&E attendance, etc.</p>