

## Rushden Medical Centre Patient Survey Report

### 1. Introduction

In November 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Rushden Medical Centre 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 Rushden 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

Rushden Medical Centre is a medium-sized practice (approximately 10,000 patients) with eight doctors (two female, six male), four practice nurses (two nurse practitioners) and one health care assistant. Plus a community nurse and midwife, health visitors and an affiliated wellbeing counsellor. It is not a training practice.

#### 2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including antenatal clinics, child health and immunisations, minor surgery and joint injections, diabetes, asthma, travel advice and vaccinations, well woman clinic, Long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) and family planning, dressings, ear syringing, and midwife counselling.

**Specialists:** No specialist services were mentioned.

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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:** Blood tests and ophthalmology patients are sent to other practices in the locality.

**Extended opening:** The practice opens on Saturday mornings. This seems to be preferred by patients - late evenings were tried but there was very little take up.

**Home visits:** Patients phone during the morning or recently have been able to book online. Visits are conducted between morning and afternoon surgeries and if a patient requests a specific doctor this is accommodated if possible.

### **2.3 Appointment booking system**

Patients can book online, by telephone, in person at reception, and in advance for both doctor and nurse appointments.

#### ***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)**

The PPG has recently been 'reinvented' and holds meeting in the surgery. GPs and staff are invited to the meetings - the Practice Manager always attends. The group produces a newsletter and undertakes surveys.

### **2.5 Complaints system**

There is a patient information leaflet and the complaints policy and a complaints form are on the internet and downloadable. All complaints whether verbal or written are recorded and these are discussed at a clinical meeting and the patient either receives a letter or is invited in for discussions. Complaints are usually resolved amicably.

### **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 loops available.
- Display boards.
- Coloured edges on steps.
- Interpretation Service.
- Saturday morning appointments given to people with learning difficulties enables more time to be spent with the patients.

### **3. Patient experience**

#### **3.1 Appointment system**

Most patients we spoke to either found it easy (six) or very easy (four) to get an appointment when they needed one. One person said it was difficult and three people thought the system to be 'OK'.

- Three patients said the system was good or they were happy with it.
- One patient was happy with the online booking system.
- One patient thought the system was better than it used to be.
- Two patients had difficulties making an emergency appointment by phone - queues were long and when they did get through all the appointments were gone.
- Another patient thought that emergency appointments were good.
- One patient was not happy at having to wait up to three weeks for a non-emergency appointment.
- One patient had difficulty getting time off work to attend appointments as advanced appointments were not released.
- One patient did not like explaining why they needed to see the GP.

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

Only three patients said that they were usually able to see the doctor of their choice. Of the ten who were not, five said that they would like to and five said that it did not matter to them who they saw.

- One patient commented that it was easier to choose the doctor for non-emergency appointments.
- Six people thought it important to see the same doctor because it gives better continuity of care, e.g. "if you see the same doctor he knows about you".
- One person said that their medical history on the computers is much better so there is no need to see same doctor.

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

All the patients that commented said that they were always (seven) or usually (six) satisfied with the treatment and service they received. Comments included:

- One person would have liked continuity of seeing same doctor - in recent years their recurrent conditions had not been followed well.
- One person said they found one or two doctors a little dismissive and tried to avoid having appointments with them.
- Another person said that sometimes doctors had to look up data and it did not instil confidence.

We asked people what they thought could improve the quality of care. 11 people commented. Many people had concerns around time keeping and waiting times:

- Five patients were not happy about how long they had to wait for their appointment at the surgery - two had been there for over half an hour. Suggestions included a system to let people know how long they may have to wait, such as a text alert.
- Two patients mentioned waits at reception and would like to see improvements in communication between the practice and pharmacy.
- Three people would like to see improvements to the appointment system with more appointment slots and fewer 'did-not-attends'.
- One person would like standard appointments to be longer than ten minutes.
- One person had concerns around parking and the distance some people might have to walk.
- One person thought the surgery "needed more doctors and nurses" and would like to see more facilities, such as "X-ray machines and diagnostic equipment in the surgery".

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

- Two people were generally happy with the service.
- Two people thought the appointment system works well.
- One person commended the drop-in service.
- One person thought reception were very helpful.
- One person liked the range of services provided and the text reminders.

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

Most of the patients did not have any problems communicating with staff or doctors. Four people had experienced some difficulties.

- Two people said that it was not always easy to understand when English was not the clinician's first language.
- One person felt one of the receptionists was unhelpful.

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 said they had additional needs and one said that these were being met.

- One person had a hearing impairment and said that the doctors explained things well.

### **3.5 Additional comments**

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

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

- One person was satisfied and “would go somewhere else if not satisfied”.
- One person said the service was “generally good”.
- One person thought the practice was “very efficient” with “a few good doctors who do not rush you”.
- One person believe the service to be “fine” and another said it “seems to be an efficiently run practice”.

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

- One person did not like being restricted to one topic per 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***

- The building is approximately 50 years old and in need of refurbishment.
- The demand for appointments is getting higher and the surgery is trying to contain demand.
- Growing population is mainly older patients with complex needs.

## **4. Highlights**

According to the results of both our patient survey and the National GP Patient Survey the practice’s appointment booking system works and most patients found it easy or very easy to get an appointment. All patients were either usually or always satisfied with their treatment.

## **5. Recommendations**

1. The introduction of a telephone triage system (where people wanting an appointment speak to a doctor) could help those patients not comfortable telling receptionist staff the reason they would like to see a doctor.
2. The practice could look at ways to improve the ability of patients to see their doctor of choice for continuity of care.
3. 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 Rushden 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>