

Saxon Spires Medical Practice Patient Survey Report

1. Introduction

In October 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Saxon Spires Medical Practice in Brixworth and Guilsborough 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 12 patients at Saxon Spires Medical Practice 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

Saxon Spires Medical Practice is a larger-sized practice (approximately 14,700 patients) based on two sites with nine doctors, five practice nurses (one nurse practitioner) and three health care assistants, plus one mental health liaison worker, a wellbeing team and counsellors. It is a training practice and there are currently no vacancies.

2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including counselling, gynaecological ultrasound scans and guided injections.

Specialists: The practice employs a counsellor. Ultrasounds are available by a GP who is qualified in Gynaecology and guided injections.

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

² <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

Shared services: No shared services are available apart from between the two surgeries of the practice.

Extended opening: Guilsborough surgery opens at 7am on Tuesdays and from 8-10am one Saturday a month. Brixworth surgery opens at 7am on Thursdays. These extended opening hours are well used.

Home visits: Care homes are visited daily for patients who are based in them, home visits as required.

2.3 Appointment booking system

Appointments can be made in person, by telephone or online.

Missed appointments

Do Not Attend appointments (DNAs) are becoming a problem at the practice.

2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The PPG meets six times a year, and is advertised on the noticeboards in the surgeries and on the website. They are currently coordinating health and wellbeing information boards at the surgeries and health walks.

2.5 Complaints system

Information is provided in a leaflet and all complaints are referred to the practice manager.

2.6 Equality and Diversity

Online equality and diversity training for staff is provided online. There has been no need for language interpreters but British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters are provided when needed.

3. Patient experience

3.1 Appointment system

Most patients (nine of twelve) we spoke to found it easy (five) or very easy to make an appointment when they wanted one. One person found it 'OK', one difficult and another very difficult.

- Four patients said it was quick and easy if they didn't specify the doctor.
- Two patients had problems with their own computer literacy when trying to book online.

3.2 Choice of doctor

Of the people who responded, three said they usually saw the doctor of their choice, five were not able to but of these four said that it did not matter to them.

- Three patients thought it was important to see the same doctor or nurse for continuity of care.

- One patient said that it can take two or three weeks to see a specific doctor.

3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service

All the patients we spoke to said that they were usually (three) or very satisfied (six) with the treatment and service they received (three did not answer). When asked to tell us more:

- One patient said they had not had a problem in 30 years although the practice is much busier now.
- One patient said it was “very good - brilliant”.

We asked people what they thought could improve the quality of care. Four people raised these issues:

- One patient said that longer appointment times would be useful.
- One patient wanted further opening on Saturdays.
- One patient thought the practice needed more doctors.
- One patient would prefer shorter waiting times at the surgery.

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

- One patient would like to be kept informed of waiting times.
- One patient suggested magazines for younger people in the waiting areas.
- Another patient stated “everyone was helpful”.

3.4 Communication and additional needs

Of the eight who responded none of the patients said they had any problems communicating with staff or doctors.

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. None of the patients we spoke to had additional needs.

3.5 Additional comments

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

- Six people gave general positive comments, such as “very nice surgery”, “very supportive”, “good atmosphere”, “very helpful”, “quite satisfied with service”.
- One person said that the parking was good.
- One person said that referrals did very occasionally need chasing up but that things were “usually pretty good”.

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 Brixworth surgery needs bigger premises - possibility of a new build as part of a local housing development but funding is uncertain.
- Constant challenge from top-down Government changes, for example extra hours.

4. Highlights

According to the results of both our patient survey and the National GP Patient Survey the practice's appointment booking system seems to be working quite well. Many patients found it either easy or very easy to get an appointment, although most patients were usually unable to see the doctor of their choice. Many patients were very satisfied with the treatment and service and no communication issues were reported.

5. Recommendations

1. The practice may wish to consider sharing some services with nearby practices to increase the services people can access closer to home.
2. Further extending opening hours in the evenings may improve access for some patients.
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 Saxon Spires Medical Practice 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>