

Spinney Brook Medical Practice

Patient Survey Report

1. Introduction

In December 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Spinney Brook Medical Practice 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 Spinney Brook 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

Spinney Brook Medical Practice is a medium-sized practice (approximately 11,231 patients) with six doctors (two female, four male) and two of which are part-time salaried GPs, seven practice nurses, some of which are part-time and three of which are nurse practitioners.

The practice is a teaching practice. It has two registrars, three phlebotomists and twelve reception and admin staff. It has one medical secretary and one senior administrator.

2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including adult immunisation; minor injuries and minor operations; family planning; nurse health checks; chronic disease management; COPD; cardiac care; dermatology; aural toilet;

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

² <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

immunisations; child assessment; abdominal aortic aneurism tests; health promotion; diabetes clinic; asthma clinic; blood pressure (hypertension) clinic; wart clinic; phlebotomy; and child health surveillance services. There are also visits from the Wellbeing team and a district nursing team and health visitors are based at the practice.

Specialists: The practice employs an in-house counsellor and the midwife will come in for clinics. There are two mental health counsellors and two wellbeing counsellors.

Shared services: The practice has a partner surgery in Woodford. Registrars work alternately at both practices so there is one registrar at each practice daily. The practice does not share any other services with other practices, although this is under discussion in the locality for the future.

Extended opening: Surgery is open until 8pm on Mondays and Wednesdays - suggested by the PPG. One nurse is on duty until 6pm every day and one nurse works one late visit. Flu clinics are held on Saturday mornings.

Home visits: These are organised between midday and 3pm in between surgeries, except in emergencies when the calls are picked up by the on-call GP.

2.3 Appointment booking system

The practice uses an in-person and telephone triage system. The Nurse Practitioner will triage early morning calls and makes appointments appropriate for the patients. Between Monday and Friday patients book on-the-day appointments with GPs who are available. More appointments booked on-the-day are available around Bank Holidays. Pre-booked appointments are also available and usually occur within two weeks of request and routine appointments are available up to three weeks in advance. There is also an on-call GP available for emergencies. The two Registrars have fewer appointments due to theirs being a learning situation.

2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The PPG was re-launched last year, up until then it had been a virtual group with online contact only. The new group meets every two months. There is a PPG noticeboard in the waiting room funded by the practice and they were involved in last year's patient survey. The PPG is producing their first newsletter that will be printed at the surgery. Some suggestions from the PPG have been taken on board, for example they voiced their opinion that the out-of-hours answering machine message was not friendly enough so the practice improved this.

2.5 Complaints system

The complaints system is displayed in a leaflet in the practice waiting room, on a notice on the waiting room board and on the website. Patients wishing to enquire may also submit complaints verbally at reception. Complaints are passed on to the Practice Manager who either speaks to the patient directly or an arrangement with the GP is made. If a complaint cannot be resolved, a face-to-face meeting with the Practice Manager or GP can be organised. These meetings are not constrained by

time and can be as long as the patient requires. Complaints are also discussed at the monthly GP meetings and records are kept for all complaints made.

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
- wheelchair access and a disabled toilet
- interpreting service mainly used for Eastern Europeans and is fairly easy to obtain with a 99% success, but most non-English speaking patients will bring someone with them who speaks the language
- one GP is the lead for learning difficulties doing ongoing reports and online checks

3. Patient experience

3.1 Appointment system

Most patients we spoke to (six out of eight) found it easy (five) or very easy (one) to get an appointment when they needed it. Two patients thought it was 'OK'.

Most positive or satisfactory experiences of getting an appointment mentioned the lack of a wait for an appointment. For example:

- Two patients had no problems with getting an appointment.
- Three patients explained emergency appointments were easy to get and on-the-day bookings were usually available for this.
- One patient found that if an issue was urgent they would be able to see a nurse.
- One patient said they didn't have to wait long to be seen by a doctor.

The patients that found it OK found that they had to wait one-two weeks for an appointment sometimes. Other negative points included:

- One patient said that it was a bit more of a wait on arrival if someone wanted to see a particular GP.
- One patient said they had to wait extra time when some other patients take longer than usual during their appointments with the doctor.
- One patient found that getting an appointment in advance was a bit more difficult than one on-the-day.

3.2 Choice of doctor

Most patients either didn't get to see a doctor of their choice but they would like to (two) or it didn't matter (three). Three patients said that they usually get to see the doctor of their choice.

- Three patients said that it didn't matter to them.
- Three patients explained that as long as any of the doctors were available, it wasn't important.
- One found that the same doctor was important for an ongoing condition.
- One patient said they would have to wait at the surgery for their specified doctor.

3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service

Most of the patients we spoke to were always satisfied with their treatment at the practice (seven). One patient was usually satisfied with the treatment. When asked to tell us more:

- Two patients were happy with things at the practice.
- One patient is diabetic and gets regular check-ups, if any problems arise they feel they can always make an appointment to see someone.
- One patient said there were no problems.

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

- Six patients wanted improvements to the parking area.
- One patient found that waiting time could be made better.
- One patient said that appointments needed to be improved.

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

- "Most things work well."
- "Emergency appointments and asthma clinics, can't fault doctors."
- "Everyone is helpful and kind usually."
- "Everything is fine, I've been here all my life."

3.4 Communication and additional needs

Two of the patients found that there were problems communicating with the doctors or other staff. One patient explained that they were deaf and usually bring along a friend.

Other patients who had no issues with communication commented that they had time to speak to the doctors, that the doctors spoke clearly and that staff were helpful, e.g.:

- "No problem, always understand what is being explained to me and I get time and don't feel rushed"
- "Everyone is very helpful"
- "Doctors explain clearly"

- “One of the doctors mumbles a little but then I’m a little deaf so could be a mixture of both”.

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.

One of the patients has hearing difficulties and uses a hearing aid and was aware of the hearing loop available at the practice. The other patient is a diabetic and was well cared for by the doctors and nurses in the surgery.

3.5 Additional comments

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

Positive:

- Three patients said they were happy with the services and surgery.
- Three patients were satisfied with their care and service.
- One patient mentioned they liked the doctors.

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

Up until recently there was no phoning system for booking appointments as patients just came into the practice and waited. After a survey the old system was reinstated due to demand from patients.

What works well?

- The practice has good feedback from patients.
- They scored Level 6 on the CQC Inspection - patients saw this and posted positive comments on Facebook.
- The practice believes they are an integral part of the community.
- Staff at the Woodford surgery are long-standing and give service above and beyond duty.

4. Highlights

According to the results from both this patient survey and the National GP Patient Survey, patients are highly satisfied with the way the booking system is currently running and praise their treatment from the practice staff and GPs. Some patients mentioned that there was a bit of a wait in the surgery to see the doctor. All patients were satisfied with the treatment they had received.

5. Recommendations

1. The practice could consider ways of improving the car parking available as this was suggested by six of the eight patients we spoke to.
2. Decreasing the time people wait in the surgery for their appointment may improve patient experience.
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 Spinney Brook 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, <i>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:</i>				
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>