

The Mounts Medical Centre

Patient Experience Survey Report

1. Introduction

In November 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited The Mounts Medical Centre in Northampton 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 11 patients at The Mounts 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 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

The Mounts Medical Centre is a medium-sized practice (approximately 15,400 patients) with six doctors (all male), four part-time practice nurses (two nurse practitioners) and one health care assistant, plus four wellbeing staff and a counsellor attached to the surgery. Following a retirement the practice is looking for another partner.

2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including a diabetic clinic, immunisations, family planning and minor surgery.

Specialists: One of the GPs is a dementia specialist.

Shared services: There is no sharing of any staff or facilities, with other practices, there are no plans for sharing any resources.

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

² <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

Extended opening: The surgery opens at 7am on Mondays and Tuesdays, and until 8pm on Tuesdays and 7.30pm on Thursdays. Flu clinics are held on Saturday mornings, and the surgery will extend hours on an ad hoc basis if the need arises.

Home visits: All GPs make home visits and there is one dedicated doctor assigned to carry out the visits each day.

2.3 Appointment booking system

Appointments can be made in person or by phone on the day from 8am onwards. Additional appointments are made available on Mondays. Advanced booking is limited to three weeks to try and reduce non-attendance. A few people use the online booking system, and whilst appointments cannot be made by email they can be cancelled by email. The telephone line was replaced with a new eight line system in December 2014 following many complaints about the single telephone line.

2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)

There is a PPG which, at the time of the visit, was not funded and not very active.

2.5 Complaints system

The complaints system is set out in the practice handbook. Complaint forms go to the practice manager who tries to resolve the issue on the day. Written complaints are acknowledged and dealt with within three days.

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:

- GPs and receptionists speak a number of different languages
- an interpreter service is available
- signage and information is in different languages
- the surgery has a hearing loop
- all patients with learning disabilities receive health checks

3. Patient experience

3.1 Appointment system

Just over half of the people we spoke to found it easy (five) or very easy (one) to make an appointment when they needed one. Three people described the system as 'OK', one person described it as difficult and another as very difficult.

- Four patients had experienced problems getting through on the telephone whilst three people had not (one person said they had to ring three times before getting through)
- Two patients were able to get appointments by the next day

- One patient said that they were always able to get an appointment on the same day
- One patient had no problems booking medication reviews two weeks in advance
- The parent of one patient was pleased that their child with learning difficulties was seen as a priority

3.2 Choice of doctor

Most patients (eight) said that they were usually able to see the doctor of their choice. Two had said they were not able to see the GP of their choice but also said that it didn't matter to them.

- Three patients thought it important to see the same doctor each time for continuity of care
- One patient said that if they were desperate they would see anyone

3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service

All the patients who responded said they were always (six) or usually (four) satisfied with the treatment and service they received. One patient added "most certainly".

We asked people what they thought could improve the quality of care. There were three comments:

- One patient found the waits at the pharmacy too long and another mentioned the impact this has on the shared waiting room, making it feel "claustrophobic"
- One patient said that parking was always a problem and that nearby parking was metered

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

- Four patients indicated that they thought everything works well
- One patient remarked "brilliant diagnosis"
- One patient said that they were "quite happy"

3.4 Communication and additional needs

Most of the patients (seven) said that they had no problems communicating with staff or doctors. One person said they did but went on to explain that the doctor was easy to talk to and listened to them. Of the two others, one person said that they found one of the GP's accent difficult to understand.

We also asked patients if they 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 and both said that these were being met.

3.5 Deaf access audit

One of our deaf volunteers visited the practice in December 2014 and looked at five areas from the point of view of a deaf patient: arrival, how to register, how to book appointments, interpretation services, and waiting room access. The volunteer's first language is British Sign Language (BSL).

Arrival: The receptionist was helpful and patient when the volunteer needed assistance and communicated via writing on a piece of paper as she could not sign basic BSL.

Registering: Registration was done on a form and the volunteer believed the form should have included a section in which it asked the patient if they needed anything extra for accessibility to services, such as an interpreter.

Booking an appointment: Online booking was available. A text message service to book appointments would improve the ability for deaf people to book appointments.

Interpreters: The practice provided an interpreter but the volunteer was unsure how quickly one would be able to be booked, as it depends who is available at a particular time.

Waiting room access: There is a television screen that shows the patient name, doctor name and room when a patient is called in.

Overall deaf awareness: It was good that the practice could provide interpreters and staff were patient when communicating with the volunteer.

3.6 Additional comments

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

Positive:

- “Nice, good GP. When I needed an urgent appointment I got one”
- “I’ve been a patient for 40 years, anybody can come into the practice”
- “Good”
- “Happy”
- “Mostly satisfied”

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

- Numbers on the practice list are rising, and approximately 50% of patients were born overseas with Polish and Chinese people making up the biggest groups

4. Highlights

According to the results of both our patient survey the practice's appointment booking system seems to be running in an acceptable manner. Many patients either found it easy or OK to get an appointment and most patients were able to see the doctor of their choice. The National GP Patient Survey suggests the appointment booking experience for patients could be improved. All patients were usually or always satisfied with the treatment and care from the practice staff and their additional needs were met.

5. Recommendations

1. The practice may find sharing of some services with other surgeries beneficial.
2. Encouraging more patients to join the PPG and developing the activities of the group could provide regular useful feedback on patient experience.
3. Expansion of areas such as the waiting room and car parking infrastructure would improve the patient experience (although the constraints are understood).
4. Deaf awareness and basic BSL training for staff and the introduction of a text message system for appointment booking would improve provisions for deaf and hard of hearing patients.

6. Thanks and acknowledgements

Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank the Practice Manager of The Mounts 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

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

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?

Q2: Have you any GP or staff vacancies? How long have these posts been vacant?

Q3: How does your appointment booking system work? (*only need to ask about what is different to the briefing*)

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?

Have any significant patient criticisms of the appointment system been reported by the PPG and how have these been addressed?

Q4: Does the practice conduct home visits?

Yes

No

How are these organised?

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?

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?

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*)

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*)

Q9: Where is your complaints system publically displayed?

E.g. Is it in the patient information leaflet, noticeboard, reception desk?

How are complaints dealt with?

Q10. How else do you communicate with patients?

E.g. noticeboards, leaflets, website, guidelines about best times to call

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?

Q12: What other staff training does your practice have?

What decision aids/training are receptionists given?

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?

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.