



Enter and View

Heathway Medical Centre, Dagenham
20th November 2018

healthwatch
Barking and
Dagenham
Delivered by LifeLine Projects

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1 Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

Details of visit:	
Service address	Heathway Medical Centre Moreland Road Dagenham RM10
Service provider	Heathway Medical Centre
Service area	GP service
Date and time	Tuesday 20 th November 2018
Authorised Representatives	Richard (Lead Officer) Blessing Matthew (Authorised Representative) Melvina Kamara (Authorised Representative)
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1.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham would like to thank the service provider, service users, visitors and staff for their contribution during the visit.

1.3 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time of the visit.



2 What is Enter and View?

- The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch to carry out Enter and View visits.
- Healthwatch representatives are recruited and trained to carry out visits to observe specific settings and give feedback.
- During a visit information is gathered through the experiences of service users, their relatives, friends and staff to collect evidence of the quality and standard of the services being provided.
- Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service, but equally they can occur when services have a good reputation.
- The visits enable us to share examples of best practice and make recommendations where improvements are needed from the perspective of people who experience the service first-hand.
- An opportunity to give authoritative, evidenced-based feedback to organizations responsible for delivering and commissioning services.
- The visits assist local Healthwatch to alert Healthwatch England or the Care Quality Commission to concerns about specific service providers of health and social care.

If you are interested in finding out more about Enter and View visits or Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham, then please visit:

www.healthwatchbarkinganddagenham.co.uk

2.1 Purpose of Visit

Our purpose was to observe and engage with patients in response to concerns raised by local people about access to GP services at Broad Street Medical Centre. The main areas being looked at were:

- Access to services
- Care and treatment
- Staff conduct



2.2 Strategic drivers

This visit was undertaken as a direct result of feedback received from the local community.

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham have received consistent feedback from local people about access to GPs in the area. Key points raised have included access to urgent GP Appointments, only speaking to the GP about one issue at a time and staff conduct.



One of the practices highlighted was Heathway Medical Centre. Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham undertook the visit to gain a clearer picture of the issues that patients share with us.

2.3 Methodology

Before the visit

- Enter and View Representatives conducted a pre-meeting to look at the feedback that was provided by the community.
- The information was used to devise a questionnaire reflecting the issues identified. The questions were used as prompts to speak to patients on the day of the visit.
- The date and time was set for the visit. The visit was unannounced; therefore prior notification was not sent to the service provider.

Day of the visit

- Healthwatch arrived at 2:30 pm on the premises. We introduced ourselves to the receptionist and we told her the purpose of our visit.
- The receptionist then passed us over to her manager who knew who we were as an organisation. After speaking to her manager, the visit continued and representatives engaged with patients and asked them questions about the service.
- Patients were approached at random and asked if they wanted to complete the questionnaire by themselves or with a representative helping them; patients were encouraged to ask any questions.
- The GP was not full, however there were quite a few people that we could approach. Everyone that we spoke to was happy to fill out the questionnaire.



To enable respondents to give their views without the fear of their personal details being shared or fearing it could have an impact on the services they receive, Healthwatch explained that as part of the Enter and View visit:

- Participation is voluntary, and individuals are not required to answer any questions that they do not want to.
- Participation or non-participation does not affect access to the services patients are currently receiving
- Information collected is kept anonymous and confidential.

Each patient was offered a Healthwatch leaflet with contact details should they wish to discuss any issues after the visit.



3 Summary of findings

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham authorized representatives undertook the visit to speak with patients about their experiences of the services received from Heathway Medical Centre.



We spoke to 13 patients on the day of the visit.

Evidence gathered from speaking to patients during the visit shows that some improvements have been made at the practice. According to patients waiting times to book an appointment have improved, a booking screen is available so patients can book-in themselves and do not need to wait for the receptionist and there are no long queues.

However, areas of improvement include:

- Patient's waiting time to see the GP.
- Not enough informative posters or leaflets
- Patients have to constantly look at the screen for their name to show up
- Self-service only had 2 language options
- A few things in the environment to be changed; for example, the broken seating.

4 Service Provision

General information

The GP Practice is set within a medical centre, located in a populated residential area close to a parade of shops that includes a community pharmacy.

The GP Practice shares the building with other community services.

Opening times

Monday: 8.00am to 8.00pm

Tuesday: 8.00am to 8.00pm

Wednesday: 8.00am to 8.00pm

Thursday: 8.00am to 8.00pm

Friday: 8.00am to 8.00pm

Saturday: 10.00am to 2.00pm

Sunday: Closed

- Healthwatch representatives observed that the receptionists were polite and fast with their service. No one was left waiting and there were no long queues. There were also a lot of staff in the office.
- There were good facilities for the patients to use. Both toilets were clean and tidy, they had soap, toilet roll and tissue.
- There is a self-service touch screen available for patients to book in for their appointment rather than seeing a receptionist.
- The building is accessible for everyone and is fully accessible to everyone's needs. There is a small play area for children as well as a spacious lift to the upper floor.
- The practice is very big and spacious, there are also many seats.
- On the information board, there was a very good practice charter in relation to how the staff should be treated but also how the patients are expected to be treated.



5 Findings

Booking Appointments

As we spoke to the patients, we observed that the majority of the patients did not know that they could book their appointment online.

Out of 13, ten patients do not book their appointments online.

Eight patients said they only use telephone to book an appointment, two people said they book in person and three people said they use both the telephone and online system.

Many patients told us that they were only aware of the telephone and face to face booking method. They said that through this system, they usually have to wait up to almost three weeks to see their GP.

They indicated that even an urgent appointment takes up to 1 week. In order to get an urgent appointment on the same day that you call, you have to phone the GP early in the morning.

As a result of this, many patients are refraining from going to the GP due to the booking system and the time they wait to get an appointment. If many people have this same view about the GP, then this can have a big effect on their health if they are ill and not wanting to pick up the phone and call because of the difficulties they encounter getting an appointment.

One of the patients said that they were told about the online booking system however, they have no knowledge of using the internet and find it hard to use.

Patients said:

“I have not been to the GP in 3 years”

“I find it increasingly difficult to make appointments. Staff are very polite and try to be helpful, but appointments are simply too hard to find”



How long do you have to wait to book a routine appointment?

Feedback shows that waiting times to book a routine appointment varied. Six patients said they waited for less than a week, one waited 1-2 weeks and six waited two weeks or more.

Some patients said the availability of appointments had improved over recent months.

Getting Through On the Phone

For many patients their preferred option was to book an appointment over the phone. However, it was evident that getting through on the phone to the practice was a challenge. Everyone we spoke to said that it was not easy getting through to the staff on the phone and they were put on hold for a long time.



Out of the 13 people we spoke with on the day, 11 people found it hard to get through on the phone and two people said they find it hard sometimes.

“I have to call 3 times for them to pick up”

“It’s terrible”

“Phone in the morning, but the time you call it’s all fully booked”



Lack of Information

During the visit authorised representatives observed that there were very few information leaflets or posters around the practice.

There were 4 notice boards around the walls where the posters were put up, but the information on the posters was too small and you could not read it clearly. However, patients mentioned that when the receptionists are asked for information, they are always helpful in explaining things.

The practice has a leaflet stand and information was scattered on a small table where patients could help themselves.



- Seven patients said they are not given enough information at their GP i.e. information about out of hours' service.
- The rest of the 6 said that they are always given information about new services in their GP.

“I have to chase my referrals; these are not done in time”

“Receptionists are always useful when it comes to explaining information”

Experience and Environment At The GP

On the day of the visit, we observed that the chairs in the practice were untidy. Every single chair in the waiting room had rips on them.

However, there were good facilities for the patient to use.

4 patients complained that they would wait a long time for their appointment but they are only with the doctor for about 5-10 minutes.

During the visit, 13 patients shared their experiences with us, of those:

- 8 patients they did not have a good experience at the GP
- 4 patients say they had a good experience at the GP.
- 1 patient said they had an ok experience

“I have a bad experience here! There needs to be better communication between the GP and the receptionist, as they can sometime be contradicting”

“I wish we can get more time to speak with the GP's”



Waiting at The Practice to Be Seen by The Doctor



Health representatives saw that many people were in the waiting room for a long time even though their appointment time had passed. As a result of this many patients were upset and kept going back to the receptionists to ask when they were going to be seen.

Feedback from the visit indicates that seven people waited at the practice between 10-60 minutes from their appointment time, to seeing a GP.

Patients were clearly dissatisfied with the waiting times, especially those who had experienced waiting for longer than 30 minutes.

When it is time for the patient to see the doctor, their name will show up on a screen mounted above the waiting area. There is a quiet sound that plays when a patient's name appears. Patients have to pay close attention to the screen so that they will not miss their appointment. Patients complained that while they are waiting for their appointment to flash up, they miss their name on the screen. As a result of this, they will miss their appointment too and have to book, waiting for up to another 3 weeks.

"I was once waiting for my appointment and I did not see my name on the screen, the receptionist said I missed my appointment so I will have to book again. I was very disappointed because I was waiting for nothing"

Language Barrier

We noticed that almost half of the patients that we spoke to did not speak or understand English. However, some patients brought another person with them interpret for them when they saw the GP. The receptionists did not acknowledge the fact that some of the patients did not speak English, therefore if the patient went to the GP by themselves, they would not understand the information given to them because the GP did not provide a translator.

The practice has an automated self-service system where you can go, to check your appointment time rather than going to the receptionist.

We noticed that on the self-service screen there were only two language options, these were English and Polish.



This means that only patients who understand English or Polish can use this system and those that understand other languages cannot.

“My sister can only come to the GP when I am available to help her translate”

“The staff need to provide a translator”

Patients highlighted that most of the information given out and the posters were all in English so they struggled to understand the information.

Staff Conduct

During the visit representatives noticed that the staff were really enthusiastic about the visit. They were also enthusiastic towards each patient. The receptionists were polite and respectful.

There were three receptionists at the front desk, so the patients were helped quickly. They also dealt well with queries.

“The staff here are always lovely”

“Some are more pleasant than others but it depends on the type of day they’re having”

Privacy

Concerns were raised that there is no confidentiality within the waiting area. One of the receptionists was talking to an elderly patient who had hearing difficulties, so the receptionist had to raise her voice when she was talking to him. During her conversation with the man, she mentioned some confidential things when reading the man’s information for him.

“Receptionist sometimes say confidential things in the waiting room or at the front desk where other people are.”



6 Recommendations

During our visit we found many good things about Heathway Medical Centre however, there are areas of concern which have been highlighted within the report and therefore we recommend the following:

Recommendations for the practice:

- The self-service screens for the patients, only has two language options. The practice should add more language options as there are a lot of people who do not speak English.
- Half of the patients at the practice had to bring in someone to translate for them. The practice should try to get a translator to help those who need one.
- There are leaflets and posters, although not that much and the print is too small for some patients to read. The practice should add more eye catching posters to the walls and they should also have an organised leaflet stand closer to the patients, so that they can have easier access to them.
- The chairs in the waiting area were not presentable at all. The practice need to get new chairs for comfort and safety. There should be a clock in the waiting area.
- If the patient would like to talk in confidence to one of the reception staff, there should be a place where they can share information with them in privacy.
- Many patients complained about having to focus hard on the screen for their name to appear and Healthwatch representatives also observed this. The practice should get a sound loop system for deaf and hard of hearing patients. Another alternative is the doctor could come out and say the patients' names.



7 Service provider response

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham did not receive a response from the practice.