



# Enter and View

Hedgeman's Medical Centre, Dagenham  
21<sup>st</sup> August 2018

**healthwatch**  
Barking and  
Dagenham  
Delivered by LifeLine Projects

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# Contents

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- Contents ..... 2
- 1 Introduction ..... 3
  - 1.1 Details of visit..... 3
  - 1.2 Acknowledgements..... 3
  - 1.3 Disclaimer ..... 3
- 2 What is Enter and View? ..... 4
  - 2.1 Purpose of Visit ..... 5
  - 2.2 Strategic drivers ..... 5
  - 2.3 Methodology ..... 5
- 3 Summary ..... 7
- 4 Service Provision..... 8
- 5 Findings..... 9
- 6 Observations ..... 12
- 7 Recommendations ..... 13
- 8 Service Provider Response ..... 14
- 9 Appendix A..... 19

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Details of visit

Details of visit:	
Service Address	92 Hedgemans Rd, Dagenham RM9 6HT
Service Provider	Hedgeman's Medical Centre
Date and Time	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2018 - 11.00am to 12.45 pm
Authorised Representatives	Richard Vann (Lead Officer) Val Shaw (Authorised Representative)
Author of report	Richard Vann
Announced/Unannounced	Announced
Contact details	Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham Lifeline House Neville Road Dagenham RM8 3QS <a href="mailto:richard.vann@healthwatchbarkinganddagenham.co.uk">richard.vann@healthwatchbarkinganddagenham.co.uk</a> 0800 298 5331

## 1.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham would like to thank the patients and practice staff at Hedgeman's Medical Centre for their contribution and support 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.



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## 2 What is Enter and View?

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The Health and Social Care Act 2012 allows local Healthwatch to carry out Enter and View visits. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/28/section/221>

- 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 so that good practice can be shared.
- The visits enable Healthwatch to share examples of best practice and make recommendations where improvements are needed from the perspective of people who experience the service first-hand.
- Healthwatch is given an opportunity to give authoritative, evidence based feedback to organisations responsible for delivering and commissioning services through enter and view observations and feedback from service users.
- 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, becoming an authorised representative for Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham, then please visit:

[www.healthwatchbarkinganddagenham.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbarkinganddagenham.co.uk)

## 2.1 Purpose of Visit

Healthwatch carries out Enter & View Visits to monitor services based on feedback received from the public. This year, one area of service that Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham is focusing on for patients' experiences is local GPs.

This visit is part of a programme of visits and looks at areas of service that include:

- Appointment Waiting Times
- Consultation Times
- Staff Conduct
- Urgent appointments
- Quality and standards of information

## 2.2 Strategic drivers

This was an announced visit. The Care Quality Commission rated the service in August 2016 as 'Requires Improvement' and revisited in September 2017 to follow up. Their revisit found improvements where they were needed and rated the service as overall 'Good'



The following were areas of concern as raised by patients:

**Waiting times for appointments**

**Doctors not consulting on more than one health issue at appointments**

**Rude and unhelpful interactions with reception staff**

## 2.3 Methodology

### Before the visit

- Healthwatch wrote to the practice manager to inform them of the intention to carry out a visit. The practice manager telephoned to speak with the lead representative to raise some concerns. These were addressed and confirmation was given that the visit would take place on a day some time over the following two weeks. Healthwatch representatives discussed how the visit would be conducted and any issues that could arise from it.
- The feedback Healthwatch gets from patients is from a questionnaire that reflects the issues people raise most when using GP services in the borough. When speaking with patients, representatives are on hand to support them to complete the questionnaire (This can be found in Appendix A).

### Day of the visit



- Healthwatch arrived at 10.30am and the lead representative introduced them self and the authorised representative. The practice manager introduced herself and confirmed that it was ok for Healthwatch to have access to the various areas of the building for the purpose of the visit.
- Representatives approached patients that were already waiting and those that arrived for appointments. Each person was asked if they wanted to complete the questionnaire.
- Participation with the Enter and View visit - including the questionnaire - was voluntary and individuals were not required to answer any questions that they did not want to.
- Patients were advised that the information collected is kept anonymous and is only used in a report to summarise the outcomes of the visit.
- If a patient wanted to get in touch with Healthwatch after the visit, contact details were exchanged.



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## 3 Summary

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Healthwatch representatives were at the medical Centre for 2 hours and engaged with a total of 9 patients and 2 members of the staff team.

Evidence gathered from the visit shows that 8 of the patients we spoke with had been registered with the practice for more than 3 years and 1 for a few months.



The overall response from patients about their experience of using the service and interacting with the staff, was a positive one. The 9 patients rated their experiences between good and excellent.

For routine appointments, patients indicated that their waiting times varied from 2 days, up to 2 weeks. None of the patients said they waited more than 2 weeks for their appointment.

The majority of patients - 6 out of the 9 - indicated that the time they got to speak with the doctor about their health matters was satisfactory. There were 3 patients however, who said that the time they had to consult with the doctor was not always long enough for them.

Here are some of the comments from patients;

- **Length of Appointment:** 'The doctor doesn't limit my time if I need a bit longer'
- 'I feel rushed into talking about issues when there is more to say'
- **Appointment Time:** 'I would prefer to have more choice for a later appointment outside of my working hours - it's disruptive'
- **Booking Online Appointments:** 'I go online to book an appointment now - it's better than trying to get through by phone!'
- **Waiting Time:** 'I've not waited longer than a week'
- 'Getting this appointment was a 3-day wait; getting through on the phone is the frustrating'



RECEPTION



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## 4 Service Provision

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### General information

- The practice has a register of 5,800 patients. The premises are situated in a populated area of Dagenham, near a busy road. Healthwatch was informed by a staff member that there has been a rapid increase in patient numbers and this has put pressure on the service and staff to adapt to the challenges. The practice has been there for many years and has a team that has worked together for a long time. Healthwatch was told that a good team ethic at the practice enables the service to share the load.
- Parking around the area presents some difficulties. There is little option for parking outside the medical centre. A bus route runs past the surgery for those who can use public transport.
- There is ramped access into the premises however, patient toilet facilities are not accessible to wheelchair users.
- The space in the waiting area is light and airy. Although the waiting area is not particularly big, padded bench seats have been set up around the walls to make best use of the available space with no obstructions for patients to negotiate when they enter.
- There was a lot of information - booklets, leaflets and posters - displayed around the waiting area about services and various health related conditions for patients to access if they needed to. A screen with a looped recording was also providing health information.
- A 'touch-screen' on a table in the waiting area enables patients to book themselves in for their appointment.
- Opening times for the reception are: 8.30am to 7.00pm Mon-Wed and 8.30am to 6.30pm Thu-Fri. There is no service at weekends.



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## 5 Findings

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### Getting through to the surgery by telephone to make an appointment.

Most patients said that they were able to get through on the telephone at certain times to make an appointment. However, there were 4 patients out of the 9 who indicated that getting through when they tried to ring up was frustrating.

### The waiting times for the next available appointment.

From the 9 people that we spoke with, all of them told us they waited less than two weeks for a routine appointment. Most said they waited for up to a week and 2 said a couple of days.



### How well patients were treated by the staff at the practice.

All the patients indicated that the way they were treated by the staff on the reception area was good or better; 5 said it was very good or excellent.

### Where patients said they knew where they needed to go urgently for evening and weekend appointments.

During the visit we found that patients understood what they needed to do if needing an urgent appointment during evenings and weekends. The majority -7 of those we asked - said they knew where to go at those times. There were 2 patients who said they did not know, but indicated they would go to A & E.

Some comments people said about this;

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“The Out of Hours number or NHS 111 if I needed to”

“GP out of hours’ service - I call the surgery and they have a number I can call”

“Queens Hospital A & E”

“NHS 111 or I would go to A & E”

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Having long enough time to consult with the doctor about health matters.

When asked about this, 6 patients indicated they had enough time to discuss their health issues. There were 3 patients who suggested that the length of time they had to consult with the doctor about all their issues, wasn't long enough. Two of those patients said the doctor didn't rush their appointments and the other declined to comment further.

**Accessing GP services online.**

Out of the 9 patients, 2 told us they used the online facility to access the GP appointment service and found it a good way to book one.

**Patients' overall experiences of using this service.**

When asked about their views and overall experience of the services at the practice, all nine people rated it between good and excellent. There were no negative comments about the overall experience patients had using this service.

These are some of the comments people had to say;

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“I have been a patient here for years, the staff are helpful and the GP has always been very good in treating and helping me”

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“I was diagnosed with COPD and I can see the nurse here if I need to rather than the doctor”

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### Methods available at the practice to book a routine GP appointment

Out of the 9 patients, some chose more than one option:

Telephone - 9; Text - 1; In person - 4; E-mail - 0; Other - 2

Two patients chose the online option as a preference.

### Length of time waiting for a routine appointment

Less than a week - 2; One week - 5; One to two weeks - 2;

These are the comments the patients said about their experience of this;

“Trying to get through on the phone first thing to get an appointment is waste of time - easier to come down to book it”

“Had no problem getting an appointment - reception was really helpful”

### Urgent Appointments and the methods that are available to book one

Telephone - 9; Text - 0; In person - 6; E-Mail - 0; Other - 0; Never had to do it - 3

Comments from patients about this;

“I try to avoid A & E - too many people with all sorts going on”

“Ring 999 if I have to”

“I have used 111 before”

“Not sure where I'd go - A & E probably”

When no urgent appointments are available, does the surgery signpost you to other services?

Yes - 8; No - 1; Sometimes - 0

Is there information in the surgery about 'out of hours' services?

Yes - 7; No - 2

Does your GP limit your discussion to one health issue per appointment?

Yes - 3; No - 6

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## 6 Observations

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### WAITING ROOM



Getting into the surgery waiting area is via a ramp up to the entrance door and over a door threshold through an entrance in a short corridor. It was easy to do and was adequately accessible for wheelchairs and people with push chairs. The open waiting area had no movement restrictions, although the area wasn't busy during the visit.

There is very little privacy for people to discuss personal issues with staff at the reception without other patients overhearing what they were saying. Healthwatch was informed that if a patient wants discuss personal issues they have the choice, to discuss them in a room that was private.

To the right of the entrance into the waiting area, there is a patient toilet facility. On observation it was not adequate for wheelchair access. Healthwatch was advised by the practice manager that 2 years previously, they were turned down for funding by the NHS development fund to extend the toilet and make it accessible for wheelchair users.

On the reception was a secure box for patients to put their repeat prescription requests into.

A 'zero tolerance' policy was on the wall that described the expectation from the practice about how patients should behave towards staff. There was no information on it however, about the behaviour patients could expect from staff.



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## 7 Recommendations

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Healthwatch representatives agreed that it was evident from the visit that the patients they spoke with were satisfied overall with the services they receive from the practice.

Responses given to Healthwatch during the visit indicated that generally patients were getting satisfactory appointment times.

Patients said that the staff at the surgery were good or better in their dealings with them. There were no responses that indicated the staff were rude to patients.

From the visit we recommend the practice considers changes concerning the following issues:

- **Length of consultations:** Some patients said they were not satisfied with the time they get to consult with the doctor, we recommend that if there are reasons why patients need longer, that the practice makes it clear that they can book a double consultation if they have complex or multiple issues to discuss. If it becomes apparent in a consultation that a patient needs longer, then the GP could arrange to see them again too. It could prevent them from having to keep going back and make better use of patient and doctor time.
- **Zero Tolerance Policy:** The practice should consider amending their zero tolerance policy to include a set of the standards of conduct that patients can expect from the staff at the practice.
- **Accessible Toilet Facility:** With wheelchair access provided into the waiting area, there should be the provision for an accessible toilet too. Not having that choice puts wheelchair users at a disadvantage compared with other patients who use the service. Healthwatch recommends that the practice relook at the requirement for an accessible toilet and take remedial action.



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## 8 Service Provider Response

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In response to the report the practice submitted the following on 22/10/2018:

Dear Mr Vann,

Thank you for your report following your visit to the surgery. Please accept my sincere apology for the delay in replying to your report.

The surgery staff, doctors and myself would like to thank you and your team for your time and very useful suggestions. We consider this a very valuable opportunity for us to improve our services and the patient care.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Deep Sahota

Practice Manager

Hedgemans Medical Practice

92 Hedgemans Road, Dagenham. RM9 6HT

Tel: 0208 592 4242

## Comments on Findings

### **Getting through to the surgery by telephone to make an appointment:**

Again the patient education is very important and plays an important part in accessing the appropriate service at appropriate time. This can and will ease off the pressure on incoming calls.

- For example, the patients are advised to ring for blood test results and routine enquiries after 2pm.
- For prescription enquiries to contact surgery after 11:30am
- The registrations are taken after 2 pm when it is a little quieter than first thing in the morning.

Some patients will still call for anything but appointments in the morning, not taking in to account anything that is being repeated on the message. This can risk the care of very ill patients and the emergencies.

### **Urgent evening and weekend appointments:**

The practice directs its patients to the GP Hub. This service is provided and commissioned by the local GPs for their patients. Who need to be seen but cannot be seen by their own GPs on the day. This service operates 7 days a week and operates an appointment system. Which opens at 2pm every day. We have received very positive feedback from our patients for this service.

It helps to reduce A&E attendances.

## Comments on Observations

### **Access:**

The surgery premises is an old building in comparison to a modern purpose build facility for a GP practice. The practice premises is well maintained. The clinicians intend to run on time unless they have an emergency or a patient with complex needs. This helps patients with parking outside the surgery. The parking places are vacated constantly to serve everyone's needs.



## **Privacy:**

The practice has an extra room (quiet /isolation room ) upstairs for patients to have a quite conversation with the practice staff including clinicians, away from the other distractions and the noise in the surgery( the health watch team were shown the room at the time of the visit by the practice manager). This room is also used for patients who might have had bereavement and may want to talk or just need someone to hold their hand to assure and comfort them.

The staff now have the use of headphones, which help them to deal with patient queries in softer voices using lower tones.

The staff are also trained and well aware of the principles of confidentiality.

## **Comments on Recommendations**

### **Length of Consultations:**

The practice has one problem per consultation policy, advising patient how to have an affective consultation. This policy makes it clear that the patients can book a double consultation if they have complex or multiple issues to discuss. I have attached a copy of the one problem one consultation policy notice for the patient for the waiting area.

The staff is trained to help patient manage and book enough time for their consultations. This policy is in place for patient safety and the welfare of the clinicians.

The practice actively promotes on line service to power patients to take control of how and when they book appointments and order prescriptions. We have one dedicated staff to help and encourage patients to register for on line services. The practice has been commended by the CCG for two consecutive years for astonishing success with on line services project. Our 80% GP appointments are available for booking on line.

The clinicians always do their best to resolve as many issues as possible during one consultation without causing inconvenience to the other patients, who arrive on time and have limited parking slot at the front and have other commitments in their lives.

Also

Presenting the clinician with multiple problems means that there is a real increased risk that mistakes will be made and things to be missed as the clinician may be inclined to rush, particularly if the other patients are waiting.

I have enclosed one appointment one consultation policy and the patient notice for the same for our waiting area.

The practice also believes in patient education. No service can operate efficiently without having a set of rules or established principles with built in flexibility.



## Access to Facilities:

The practice has discussed the wheelchair access to the surgery toilets for the disabled patients. Most average sized wheelchairs are able to access these toilets. The practice has realized that some of the patients may have bigger wheelchairs and find the maneuvering a little difficult. The practice will be looking to fund this actively. We are open to any suggestions the health watch may have to our problem as your team is very experienced in these matters.

## Zero Tolerance Policy:

Please see attached amended Zero tolerance Policy

# Hedgemans Medical Centre

## One Problem Per Consultation policy

**This Practice has a ‘One Problem Per Consultation’ policy**

**We would always encourage patients to book Double/LONGER appointments if there are multiple problems that need discussing.**

To book longer appointments please ask reception for help.

## Suggestions for a successful consultation

- Book adequate time with the clinician, so you do not have to rush or worry. The doctor will be able to run the clinic on time without causing any inconvenience to other patients.
- Arrive well before your appointment time.
- Keep a symptom diary
- Explain how you're feeling.
- Keep and bring a note of all your medication including off the counter medication.
- Write a list of questions you want to ask the doctor.
- Prioritise which problem needs to be addressed urgently.
- Have an open mind.
- Be Truthful about your symptoms.
- Do not be embarrassed, your doctor has heard it all.
- Do not ask your GP to complete private forms, Repeat Prescriptions( request repeat prescriptions following the practice Repeat Prescription Policy) and Ongoing medical certificates during the consultation.

**Full Policy is available on request.**

**We kindly ask that all patients try and stick to our ‘One Problem Per Consultation’ policy. The main reason for this request is for clinical safety.**

We know that getting an appointment with the doctor is sometimes difficult and that some patients ‘save’ their problems and present them to the doctor at the same time, with or without a list. We also know that the clinician may run late. All of this increases the tendency for patients to present multiple problems to their doctor/ANP at one consultation.

Each appointment is only 10 minutes long. Ten minutes really is not a lot of time, even for just one problem, e.g., 1 minute to get to doctor’s room and sit down, 3 minutes to tell a history, 3-4 minutes to perform a targeted examination, 2 minutes to explain, advise and treat. There is no time left of the ten minutes to write up notes, fill out forms, dictate referrals or speak to other team members for advice.

Presenting the clinician with multiple problems means that there is a real increased risk that mistakes will be made and things to be missed as the clinician may be inclined to rush, particularly if other patients are waiting.

One of Primary Care’s main purposes is to detect serious disease early. Presenting multiple problems to the clinician, not all of which may be serious, increases the difficulty of this task – it is like finding the ‘needle in a haystack’.

Doctors cannot see huge numbers of patients with multiple problems and continue to practice safely and effectively. A stressed doctor will struggle to be a good and safe doctor.

We do consider that GP appointments are a limited resource and we would kindly ask that such a service be used with care and consideration.

Therefore please do not be offended if the doctor asks you to rebook for your other problems. We are working in your best interests in order to keep you safe.

Reviewed Oct 2018  
Review Due Oct 2019



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## 9 Appendix A

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The following questions were used by Healthwatch representatives to gather responses from patients during the visit.

- How long have you been a registered patient with this surgery?
  - Always
  - Sometimes
  - Never
- When you contact the surgery for an appointment, how easy is it to get through and get a response that you are satisfied with?
  - Always
  - Sometimes
  - Never
- When making an appointment, how long were you told you would have to wait for the next available one?
  - Days
  - Weeks
- How well were you treated by the staff at the practice?
  - Poorly
  - Good
  - Very Good
  - Excellent
- If you needed to see a GP urgently, would you know where to go?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Where would you go? (Please use the space below)
- In your view, does the time you get for appointments deal with your needs in a satisfactory way?
  - Yes
  - No
  - If 'No' please say why
- Have you tried to access your GP services on-line?
  - Yes
  - No
  - If yes, how well did it work for you?
- Overall, what is your experience of using services and dealing with staff at this practice?
  - Poor
  - Fair
  - Good
  - Very good
  - Excellent



- What methods are available at your practice to book a GP routine appointment?

Telephone  
Text  
In Person  
E-Mail  
Other

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

Less than 1 week  
1 week  
1 to 2 weeks  
2 + weeks

- What methods are available at your practice to book a GP urgent appointment?

Telephone  
Text  
In Person  
E-Mail  
Other

- Please use this space to make any comments in regards to urgent appointments:

- If your unable to get an urgent appointment, does the surgery support you by signposting you to other services?

Yes  
No

- Is there information within the surgery about out of hours' services?

Yes  
No

- When you attend an appointment, does your GP limit your discussion to one health issue each visit?

Yes  
No