



Enter and View

Tulasi Medical Centre, Dagenham
11th June 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	10 Bennetts Castle Lane Dagenham RM8 3XU
Service Provider	Tulasi Medical Centre
Date and Time	11 th June 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 richard.vann@healthwatchbarkinganddagenham.co.uk 0800 298 5331

1.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham would like to thank the patients and practice staff at Tulasi Medical Centre for their help and 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. <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

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 will look 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. We spoke with people from the local community who are residents from Barking and Dagenham that use this service.

The following areas were highlighted:

Space in the waiting areas

The way that staff communicate with patients



2.3 Methodology

Before the visit

- Before the visit, Healthwatch wrote to the practice to inform them of our intention to visit on the day. Representatives discussed how the visit would be conducted; how patients would be engaged on the premises and any issues arising from the visit would be addressed.
- The feedback we received from patients was in response to a questionnaire developed by Healthwatch, that reflected the issues people using GP services across the borough of Barking and Dagenham told us about. When speaking with patients at the GP Practice, representatives were on hand to support them to complete the questionnaire themselves (This can be found in Appendix A).



Day of the visit

- Healthwatch arrived at 11.00am and the lead representative spoke with the reception staff to introduce themselves and the authorised representative. The staff were expecting us and were helpful and courteous.
- The receptionist confirmed with the practice manager that Healthwatch could access all areas of the building and gave permission for photographs to be taken for the purposes of the visit.
- Representatives approached patients as they both arrived and left the GP practice. Each person was asked if they wanted to participate and complete the questionnaire.
- It was explained that participation with the Enter and View visit - including the questionnaire - was voluntary, that individuals are not required to answer any questions that they did not want to and that their personal information wasn't necessary to participate, unless they felt they wanted it to be included.
- Whether patients chose to participate in the Enter & View questions or not did not affect access to the service that they were there to receive.
- Information collected remains anonymous and only used to summarise the outcomes of the visit.
- If a patient wanted to get in touch with us after the visit, contact details were exchanged.



3. Summary of findings

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham representatives were at the surgery for 1 hour 45 Minutes; we engaged with a total of 14 patients who attended the GP practice during that time.



Evidence gathered from the visit shows that all the patients we spoke with had been registered with the practice for more than 2 years.

The overall response from patients that we spoke with about their experience of using the GP practice and interacting with the staff, was a positive one. For 13 out of the 14 responses they rated their experience between good and excellent with 1 patient indicating it was fair.

For routine appointments, 14 patients indicated that their waiting time varied from less than 1 week and up to 2 weeks. None of the patients we spoke to waited more than 2 weeks for their appointment. However, patients did advise that they were not able to choose an appointment date beyond a 2-week period, as the practice's computer system didn't enable appointments to be booked any further ahead than that, even though they had been asked to do so by the GP at the end of their consultation.

The majority of patients we spoke to - 10 out of the 14 - indicated that the time they got to speak with the doctor about their health matters was satisfactory. There were 4 patients however, who said the time they had to consult with the doctor was not satisfactory for them.

Here are some of the comments from patients;

● **Length of Appointment:** 'Not enough time with an actual doctor'

● **Appointment Time:** 'I work and it is hard to get appointments in the evening after 7 or at weekends.'

● **Booking Online Appointments:** 'This worked very well for me to book an appointment.'

● **Waiting Time:** 'Too long to wait'
'I need my appointment when I'm ill, not two weeks later.'



RECEPTION



4. Service Provision

General information

- The practice has an overall register of 20,700 patients spread over 3 locations – the other 2 sites located at Parsloes Avenue, Dagenham and Ripple Road, Barking. The Tulasi premises is situated in a populated area of Dagenham, near a busy community high street. The practice has been there for many years.
- There is limited parking for patients around the area in the local streets. A bus route runs past the surgery for those who can use public transport.
- A toilet facility is provided for patients to use; it has signage indicating that it is suitable for disabled people.
- The space in the waiting area is very compact with the seating fixed to the floor with the back row of seats arranged to face the reception area and the others facing towards a wall with the appointments screen monitor mounted on it. It was evident during the visit for one of the Healthwatch representatives who is a wheelchair user, that accessing the waiting area was a difficult challenge, especially when it got busy and there was no room to move around.
- There was a good amount of information displayed around the surgery for patients to access if they needed to.
- There was an information screen on the wall that was used to inform patients about their appointment and when they could go in. It was noted that beneath that there was a trailing lead that could be a hazard if someone tripped on it.
- Opening times for the surgery are: 8.00am to 6.30pm Mon-Fri and 9am to 5pm on Saturday.
- Notices were on display advising patients of where they can get an appointment outside of surgery hours to see a doctor.
- Guidance was displayed giving notice for the expectation of patient behaviour towards staff. It did not however, mention what behaviours patient should expect from staff.



5. Findings

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

Most patients said that they were sometimes able to get through on the telephone to make an appointment. However, there were 3 patients out of the 14 who said they could never get through when they tried to ring up to get an appointment.

The waiting times for the next available appointment.

From the 14 people that we spoke with, all of them told us they waited for two weeks or less. A patient told representatives that when they tried to book a routine appointment when instructed to do so by their GP beyond a 2-week period, they were informed by the reception staff that the computer appointment system wouldn't allow them to set an appointment beyond 2 weeks.



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

All the patients with the exception of one, indicated that the way they were treated by the staff on the reception area was good; others 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 information displayed on the walls advising patients of what to do if they needed an urgent appointment during evenings and weekends. The majority of those we asked said they knew where to go at those times. There were four patients who said they did not know.

Some comments people said about this;

“I would ring NHS 111 and if I needed to I would go to A&E mainly”

“GP out of hours’ service - I call the surgery and they direct me where to go”

“Barking Community Hospital has the Walk in Centre where I go”

“For advice I ring NHS111”

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

When asked about this, the majority of patients indicated they had enough time to discuss their health issues. There were however, four patients who indicated that they didn't get a satisfactory length of time to consult with the doctor.

Accessing GP services online.

Out of the 14 patients, one told us they used the online facility to access the GP appointment service and that it worked really well for them.

Patients' overall experiences of using this service.

When asked about their view and overall experience of using services at this GP practice, eleven people indicated that it was good or very good; two said it was excellent and one said it was fair. There were no negative comments about the overall experience of using this service.

These are some of the comments people had to say;

“The people are very good - some are excellent! The NHS is best!”

“The surgery needs to open all weekend and after 7pm as well. The waiting area needs to improve and I think the text messages are a good idea”



Methods available at the practice to book a routine GP appointment

Out of the 14 patients, some chose more than one option:

Telephone - 10; Text - 2; In person - 5; E-mail - 1; Other - 1

No patients chose the online option as their preference.

Length of time waiting for a routine appointment

Less than a week - 2; One week -4; One to two weeks - 8;

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

“Access to next month’s calendar - the doctor’s reception can’t access next month’s calendar until the manager allows”

“The service doesn’t allow you to do it straight away - diary isn’t opened up to do so!”

“Long wait on the phone to get through”

“Non-emergency you have to wait to call at 8am...if you can get through!”

Urgent Appointments and the methods that are available to book one

Telephone - 11; Text - 0; In person - 3; E-Mail - 0; Other - 0; Never had to do it - 0

Comments from patients about this;

“Long wait on the telephone to get through”

“So full up when you go”

“Not enough doctors; too many customers”

“This is why I have to go to the hospital for emergency”

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

Yes - 7; No - 3; Sometimes - 4

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

Yes - 7; No - 7

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

Yes - 6; No - 8

6. Observations

Getting into the surgery waiting area is through an entrance in a short corridor. It was adequately accessible for wheelchairs and people with push chairs, although it became difficult, with little space to maneuver into when the surgery got busy.



In the middle of the waiting area there are seats fixed to the floor for patients to sit down. As the surgery got busier, the amount of seating seemed to be adequate for the number of people that flowed through the surgery during the visit. Some patients chose to stand and wait at the entrance area, most notably those with young children.

There is very little privacy for people to discuss personal issues with reception staff without other patients overhearing what they were saying.

People with pushchairs or wheelchair users would have difficulty moving around in the very limited space of the waiting area without being concerned with getting in the way of other patients or becoming a trip hazard.

In the entrance corridor and next to the entrance to the waiting area there was a toilet facility that was deemed to be fully accessible for patients. On observation it was not adequate for every person's needs especially wheelchair users. There was no cleansing soap for people to wash their hands.

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 behaviours patients could expect from staff.



7. Recommendations

Healthwatch representatives agreed that it was evident from the overall feedback received, that patients who use this surgery at Tulasi Health Centre were satisfied with the GP services they receive.

Responses given to Healthwatch during the visit indicated that generally patients were getting satisfactory appointment times. It was suggested by one person that opening times could be extended for routine appointments, to accommodate the needs of people who work later.

Patients said that the staff at the surgery were courteous and professional, not rude or aggressive to deal with.

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

- **Discussing one health issue per appointment:**

There should be a consistent approach to enabling patients to discuss more than one health issue during an appointment. It is evident from the visit that this is done for some patients and not others.

- **Length of consultations:** Some patients said they were not satisfied with the time they get to consult with the doctor, we suggest that if there are reasons why a person needs longer, that the practice sets longer consultations times to meet individuals' needs as this could prevent them from having to keep going back and would represent a better use of patient and doctor time resource.
- **Patient Privacy:** Discussing private and personal information in the reception area gives no privacy for patients - the practice should consider a space where discreet conversations could take place when needed.
- **Zero Tolerance Policy:** Consideration should be given to including a policy that clearly sets the standard of conduct that patients can expect from staff at the practice.
- **The Waiting Area Seating:** In such a small waiting area, the fixed seating was very restrictive for parents with pushchairs and anyone that uses a wheelchair or has mobility difficulties. Having seating that can be moved to make better use of the available space should be considered to enhance patient experience.



8. Service Provider Response

Healthwatch sent this report for the attention of the Practice Lead and Practice Manager on 20th July 2018 and asked for a response by 24th August 2018.

There was no response from the practice by the date requested and after two further requests - by telephone and e-mail - with no response either, Healthwatch submits this report without reply.



9. Appendix A

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?
- 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