

Enter and View Visit

Essex House Surgery

Station Road, Barnes, SW13 0LW

Date of visit: Monday 14th September

Visitors: Liz Grove, Yvonne Peel

Published: 21/12/2015

Healthwatch Richmond

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Introduction

Essex House Surgery is located on Station Road, Barnes and has a total of 9000+ registered patients. The practice has one Practice Manager, seven GPs and two trainees, one Physician Associate, two Practice Nurses, one Health Visitor, one Community Nursery Nurse two Healthcare Assistants, and a team of Medical Administrators.

Essex House is a training surgery using the current new diagnostic model which uses Physician Associates to diagnose possible conditions. A staff member at the surgery told us *'Essex House puts emphasis on quality, training and teamwork. We are extremely unusual in the commitment of resource, both time and financial and we could argue that is the best investment we make. Our stable committed team (even in the challenging environment of the NHS) hopefully is a reflection of this'*.

One visit was carried out to Essex House on Monday 14th September 2015 between 5-7pm by two Healthwatch Richmond Authorised Representatives.

Overall Findings

Impression of the practice

Overall, patients we spoke to reported being very satisfied with the practice, patients described themselves as being *'very impressed'* and the practice as *'excellent'*. One patient told us they would recommend the practice to family and friends because *'GPs are empathetic and take time to listen to patients and are also very knowledgeable'*

GP Hub

Essex House was the first General Practice Hub site to be established meaning that the practice receives patients from other surgeries that need a same day appointment or an appointment of their choosing with extended hours or weekend appointments. Our visit took place shortly after the service launched. On the day of the visit we spoke to two Hub patients who told us they were happy the surgery could accommodate them so quickly.

Staff

Staff at the practice were described as *'very friendly'*, *'informative'*, *'knowledgeable'* and *'honest'*. All the patients we spoke to said they would recommend the practice to family and friends. All the patients we spoke to told us that they felt that there was a good level of communication between the clinical staff and reception, and that reception staff would know when to call for clinical help if needed. All of the patients also told us that the staff they had appointments with acted in a professional manner, were respectful and considerate and had the skills needed to carry out their care. Reception staff were described as *'very polite'*, *'friendly'* and *'helpful'*.

Physical environment

Overall environment

On the day of the visit the rooms we viewed, which included the waiting areas, appointment rooms and toilets, were clean and airy.

The waiting room for the surgery featured relevant literature, had toys and children's books for younger patients. The waiting room was large, clean and easily accessible,

Toilets, including disabled toilets were clean; however the hand dryer was out of order.

The surgery provided patients with a small private room within waiting room in which they could take their own blood pressure. We were told that this was to eliminate 'white coat syndrome'; patients were provided with an information sheet in the room with instructions on how to take their blood pressure, and with a slip of paper to record their readings and hand to the Doctor.

Accessibility

The entrance has a large recess to the side for buggies and wheelchairs and a ramp to the front door as well as steps with a handrail for ease of access to the surgery. Consulting rooms were large enough in the practice to allow wheelchair users to manoeuvre. Disabled toilets were large and accommodating for wheelchairs.

The site also has a lift for patients to use but on the day of the visit, we noticed an issue with the sensors for the lift, causing the doors to close whilst walking into the lift. On one occasion, the doors closed on a member of staff, wedging that member between the doors.

Patients are called by loud speaker whilst in the waiting area advising patients to which consulting room they must go. On occasion, staff will come into the waiting room to collect patients, but others use the intercom.

One patient told us that on one occasion they witnessed an elderly patient showing confusion and distress as she could not hear the speaker announcement and became distressed as she thought she had missed her appointment. The patient suggested to us that the lack of visual information when appointments are called was not user friendly for the hard of hearing.

Recommendations

We recommended that the surgery urgently looks into the lift malfunction to avoid any further incidents.

We also recommend that the surgery look into including visual information to inform patients that they are being called or to inform staff when hard of hearing patients are called for an appointment.

Outcome

The practice confirmed to us that the lift company were informed of the malfunction the next day and that practice staff have included tests of the lifts along with their regular weekly fire alarms tests.

The practice told us that *"a visual patient call screen is something that we are looking at in the short to medium term. The GPs do tend to ring out to reception if they know the patient waiting to see them has hearing difficulties, but I accept that this can be hit and miss"*