

Enter and View Report:

RICHMOND GREEN MEDICAL CENTRE

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Introduction

In February 2014, Healthwatch Richmond held a public GP Forum with local residents, GPs and key organisations involved in General Practice. We asked the community for feedback about their experiences of using the GP services. The feedback we received encouraged us to further investigate the level of service provided in the Borough.

Healthwatch Richmond analysed data collected in the Ipsos Mori July 2014 and January 2015 GP Patient Report. We triangulated this data from practices across the borough with data available on NHS Choices between January and September 2014, data collected for the Healthwatch Richmond Infobank, the Friends and Family Test and our GP Report, March 2014. This information indicated that there was a variation in patient experience of GP services across the borough. We identified practices with high, medium and low levels of patient satisfaction and cross-referenced these with comments on NHS Choices. Based on this we identified a number of practices to visit across the range of patient experience. It was based on these findings that Richmond Green Medical Centre was selected to receive visits.

Our intention in conducting Enter and View visits to GP surgeries, was to identify both positive practice and any issues on which we may make recommendations for improvements.

Richmond Green Medical Centre is located on The Green in Richmond and has a total of 2,083 patients registered. The practice has one practice manager, two doctors, one healthcare assistant, one practice nurse and three receptionists.

Methodology

Setting up the visits

The visits to Richmond Green Medical Centre took place on the 20th April and 5th May. The visits were undertaken by two staff or volunteer authorised Enter and View Representatives. Each visit lasted two hours, one taking place in the morning and the other in the afternoon to ensure greater accuracy and representation of the patient population in our data. Enter and View Representatives undergo a thorough recruitment and training process including application, references, interviews, Enter and View training, specific training on conducting visits in GP Practices, and DBS checks. All the Enter and View representatives carried photographic identification cards at all times during the visits.

The practice was contacted in advance and mutually acceptable dates were agreed for the visits, which was then confirmed in writing. The visits were conducted in line with the Healthwatch Richmond Enter and View Policy, a copy of which was provided to the practice before the visit.

Conducting the visits

Enter and View representatives approached patients in the waiting room of the practice, introducing themselves, Healthwatch Richmond and the purpose of the study. Patients were then asked for their consent and, once given, volunteers conducted a semi-structured interview. Our interviews with patients encouraged comments on both positive and negative aspects of the practice and focused on:

- Access to services
- Quality of care
- Overall satisfaction with the practice
- Any improvements patients would like to see

In addition, practice staff were interviewed and an observational audit of the service was carried out at each visit.

Each of the four Enter and View Representatives provided written reports of their findings, which were analysed by Healthwatch staff to identify trends and key issues arising from the data collected. These findings are presented below.

Limitations

Whilst we tried to ensure accuracy in data by conducting our visits on one afternoon and one morning, it became clear that most of the patients we spoke to were either retired or currently not working. It is important to note that this may have had an impact on our findings, particularly in relation to opening hours and accessibility of booking appointments.

Overall Findings

Overall, our findings suggest that patients are highly satisfied with their experience of Richmond Green Medical Centre.

Most importantly for patients, the surgery has a small patient population and is situated locally, *“the best thing is how small it is, and the doctors know everything about me, as do the receptionists.”* Overall, patients felt that they could always get an appointment when they wanted one and noted this was down to the *“accommodating staff.”* Our findings also reveal that the surgery takes a very proactive approach to patient feedback as exposed by extended opening hours in the week. The patients we interviewed felt that their opinions were appropriately heard and responded to by the practice staff.

We also identified small areas for improvement, especially in regards to communication and the information available for patients. In particular, we did not observe information in alternative languages, despite speaking to a number of patients whose first language was not English. In addition, patients were unaware of the existence of the online booking system and we observed no communication about this on the practice website, leaflet or indeed inside the practice.

Findings

Environment

The practice is situated within the peaceful surroundings of The Green in Richmond. Whilst the building is clearly marked with a sign presenting the name of the surgery, it does not include the names of the surgery's doctors. The practice's opening hours were clearly marked in the front window of the surgery. However, our representatives felt that they could be more clearly advertised inside the practice, especially in the waiting room area.

With a ramp to the front door and a wide entrance, the practice provides good access for wheelchairs. Staff assured us that wheelchairs and prams could access all areas of the practice, despite very narrow corridors through to the waiting room area. A spacious disabled toilet is included and was in a good condition during our visits.

The practice clearly advertises the range of clinics offered and the different services provided by the health professionals working there on their website. However, there was no information on staff at the practice and we did not observe staff wearing name badges. Comments from patients and staff suggested this was because *"everyone knew everyone."*

The waiting room was very small with 12 chairs in a confined space. Yet, we observed that this provided plenty of space for the number of patients waiting with a maximum of three waiting at any one time.

The furnishings were very old fashioned, and we did observe some wallpaper coming off the wall close to the entrance. The surgery is lined with carpeted floors throughout and chair surfaces are non-washable. The practice informed us that the carpet floors at the practice are cleaned twice weekly and steamed when required. The seats in the waiting area are also cleaned twice weekly and steamed when required. Overall, the environment was positively viewed by our visitors and by the patients.

We recommended that a display at reception of staff names and their different functions could be helpful to any new patients and should be made clear to all patients. All staff should wear badges detailing their names and job title.

We also recommended that during its next refurbishment, the practice should consider investing in washable floors and furniture throughout the practice to ensure it is easy to clean and maintain the premises. This will help to reduce the risk of infection.

Practice's Response

The practice assured us that all staff will wear NHS cards with their names and job title in the very near future. They noted that the small size of the practice means that most patients know staff by their names.

The practice will consider investing in washable floors and furniture when the funds are made available from NHS England. They informed us that the PPG did not consider linoleum floors and plastic chairs in keeping with the practice's location in Richmond nor with its patients' expectations.

Reception

We observed that the reception area was very close to the entrance, causing potential problems for patients wanting to have confidential conversations if queues build. This problem did not arise during our visits and staff reassured us that it was rarely an issue.

We recommended that the surgery places a sign at reception stating that if patients would like to have a confidential conversation with staff then they can ask to speak to them in another room. This will mitigate any issues if queues do develop.

Practice's Response

The practice told us that when patients wish to have a confidential conversation with a member of staff, they just ask at reception and the patient is taken to a side room.

They assured us that since receiving our report, a sign has been placed on the notice board at reception to inform patients that if they would like to have a confidential conversation with a member of staff they can ask to them in another room.

Atmosphere

Most of the patients we spoke to told us that they were drawn to the "*local, family feel*" of the surgery. Many of the patients told us that they would just "*pop-in*" to enquire about prescriptions or appointments because they lived so close to the surgery. One patient told us that they wouldn't recommend the surgery because they didn't want it to become "*over-crowded, it's just perfect as it is.*" Another patient commented that "*the best thing is how small it is, the doctors know everything about me, as do the receptionists.*" The staff we interviewed also spoke about knowing the patients very well and therefore being able to help them in the most appropriate way.

Patient Advocacy

Patient Feedback

The practice has received one complaint in the past 12 months. The Practice Manager told us that the practice is very proactive with any concerns raised by patients and bases their work on a, "*compliment, comments and complaints procedure.*" We were

told that this meant that any problems raised would be dealt with quickly before it even reached the stage of an official complaint. We observed a feedback box and noted that the complaints policy was clearly shown in the practice.

The practice's Patient Participation group (PPG) is clearly advertised. It is clear that the PPG has been extremely proactive in ensuring that extended and improved care is delivered to the patient population. In particular, the extended hours have been modified following a patient survey and telephone consultations have been introduced. The patients attested this, expressing their appreciation of the extended hours and telephone consultations.¹

In turn, the Practice Manager told us that the practice has approached feedback from the PPG in a collaborative manner, *"we find them inspiring and the practice team appreciates the feeling of mutual involvement and support from the group."*

However, when asked about the PPG, most patients we spoke to were unaware of their existence or function within the surgery, despite the clear advertisement.

Information

Our visitors observed large amounts of printed information in the practice. Information about local services is displayed on the patients' notice boards in the waiting area and at reception. In the waiting area, there are two A4 folders that contain leaflets with information about all local support services available to patients. The Practice Manager informed us that the rotating information stand is refilled with new information regularly.

A number of patients said they had found the information displayed in the practice useful especially in relation to their condition or felt that they could ask their doctor for information if needed

While there was a significant quantity of information in the practice there were some important pieces of information that we did not observe and felt should be provided by the practice. This included information in alternative languages for people whose first language was not English. We spoke to a few patients where English was not their first language and therefore had trouble understanding the information provided. We were informed by the practice that both British Sign Language (BSL) service and translation service is available on request.

We recommended that the practice should consider providing information in other languages, or promoting the option for information in other languages, as well as the translation service². Patients using foreign languages should be given online access to

¹ PPG report March 2015

² The NHS Choices website provides information in other languages - <http://www.nhs.uk/aboutNHSChoices/aboutnhschoices/Aboutus/Pages/languageshub.aspx>

information. A card providing a language key is a good way to provide access to information for patients inside the surgery.

We did not see any evidence of this information during our visit but the practice told us that in their practice leaflet it states that a translator can be arranged with prior notice if patients so wish. At reception, they also told us that there is a Language Identification guide that the receptionists can give to patients when required.

Appointments

Booking appointments

During our visits, the majority of patients told us that booking appointments was easy, that they had been able to book with the GP of their choice, that they could always get appointments when they needed them and that they were happy with the appointments on offer to them.

Most patients told us that if it was urgent, they could always get an appointment on the day, *“The surgery tries really hard to get you a same day appointment, I cannot fault it.”* One patient told us that he had to wait a week for an appointment once but that he was satisfied because it wasn’t *“an emergency.”*

One patient we interviewed told us that it is hard for her to get an appointment when she wants one because she is in full-time work.

Currently, there is no text message appointment reminder service. The PPG have conducted a survey with patients to understand whether this is something that would be used by patients.³ The findings have yet to be published.

The practice has a functioning online booking system and has started advertising the system to patients and collecting patients email addresses to facilitate the process. Most patients were not aware that appointments could be booked online. One patient said that they weren’t aware of the online appointment booking system, but they would use it if it was on offer. Another patient told us that they would not use it because they are *“not online.”* After visiting the practice we looked for the online booking system on the practice website. We could not find any information about it on the practice website or indeed, in the practice leaflet.

The current method of promoting the online appointment booking service is ineffective. We recommended that the practice improves the way the online system is promoted by ensuring information on how to register is presented in the practice leaflet and on the website. This will make the process simpler for patients who would like to use this service.

³ PPG report 2015

Practice's Response

The practice responded that they are currently updating all patients' telephone numbers and email addresses. The practice is offering newly registered patients the choice of registering for online services. Once the system is running without problems, the service will be offered to all patients.

The practice also told us that many patients have expressed reservations as the system places them at a disadvantage as they are not online and gives priority to the young, computer savvy patients who have less medical needs.

Waiting times

During one of our visits, the waiting room was observed to be very quiet. Most patients noted that it took no more than 10-15 minutes waiting time before they were seen. However, one patient told us that waiting times, *"get progressively worse as the day goes on."*

Opening Hours

The majority of patients we spoke to were happy with opening hours, many commenting on the extended hours on Wednesday evening. Patients told us that they had never had to use another service because the surgery was closed.

However, one patient we spoke to told us that it would be helpful to have more weekend and evening appointments because they were in full-time employment.

Out of Hours

Information about out of hours is displayed outside the surgery and the practice leaflet explains the use of different services. A poster is also displayed in the waiting area and another poster "where can you get the right treatment" is displayed explaining how to access various services including out of hours access. Most patients we spoke to didn't know there was an out-of-hours service available but noted that they could probably look it up on the website or in the practice leaflet.

Quality of care

Training and Professional Development

Staff members interviewed felt well supported in their roles, enjoyed their jobs and felt that they were offered and encouraged to undertake regular training. Our representatives were satisfied with the training and qualifications achieved by staff.

The majority of patients we spoke to felt that the best thing about the practice was the welcoming staff. Perceptions about the staff overall were very positive, being described as *"welcoming"* and *"caring,"* which was supported by our own observations.

Receptionists

Patients viewed the reception staff as “*friendly*,” “*pleasant*” and “*considerate*.” Most acknowledged that the receptionists are respectful and would try hard to “*accommodate my needs*.”

GPs and Nurses

Many said that they had confidence in their skills and ability and didn't have any problems in discussing problems with them. The doctors at the surgery were described as, “very caring,” “jovial,” “happy,” and “kind.”

The majority of patients felt they were involved in their care and treatment, that they were given choice and they could always ask if there was something they didn't understand.

Final Recommendations

The practice assured us that all staff will be wearing name badges with their job title in the near future. Additionally, they told us that they would consider investing in washable floors and furniture when funds become available. The practice also told us that a sign has been placed at reception informing patients that if they would like a confidential conversation with a staff member, they can ask to speak to them in another room. Finally, the practice assured us that once the online booking system is running without problems, the service will be promoted clearly and offered to all patients.

We would like the practice to consider our final recommendations:

Practice Environment

Healthwatch Richmond would like an update from the practice on their consideration for washable floors and furniture. Whilst the PPG does not consider linoleum floors and plastic chairs in keeping with the practice's location, the addition of washable surfaces will reduce the risk of infection.

Information

Healthwatch Richmond recognises that the translation service is advertised in the practice leaflet and that a Language Identification guide is provided a reception. We also recognise producing leaflets in multiple languages may not be financially feasible. We recommend that the practice produce a small amount of information in multiple languages, for example a poster that advertises the availability of a translation service may not be expensive.

The practice could also contact other practices in the borough who already have information in multiple languages, which could be shared. For example, at Richmond Green Medical Centre, a Language Identification guide is given out by receptionists to patients when required.

Patient Awareness of Online Booking Service

Once the online system is running without problems, Healthwatch Richmond would like an update on whether the system is being promoted online and in the practice leaflet. Whilst the practice believe many patients would not find the system helpful, the practice is required to have a working online booking system.

Conclusion

Healthwatch Richmond welcomes the practice's response and commitment to implementing our recommendations. We look forward to receiving assurance that the recommendations have been implemented.