



GP access and Out of Hours Provision Survey 2015



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Healthwatch nationally and locally

Healthwatch Gateshead was established under the Health and social care act 2012 and came into existence on 1st April.

Healthwatch Gateshead is the independent local consumer champion across Gateshead.

We provide an opportunity for local residents to have a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care are provided locally.

We bring together residents views and experience of local health and social care services and use this feedback to build a picture of where services are doing well and where they can be improved.

We also provide residents with information about the choices they have and what they can do if things go wrong.

Nationally the Healthwatch Network is made up of 148 local Healthwatch with Healthwatch England in place to offer leadership, guidance and support to the network.



Research Remit

Why GP Services?

Healthwatch Gateshead (HWG) was receiving anecdotal comments on access to GPs and Out of Hours Provision. We acknowledged that there appears to be a common theme both regionally and nationally and we wanted to try and establish a clearer picture of how things are working for the residents of Gateshead. There are currently 31 GP Practices and 4 Branch Surgeries in Gateshead.

We initially worked with the Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG) to find out what level of service patients should expect to receive to provide a base point to compare the results from the survey. The questions were then developed to gauge patients experiences on the following:

- Booking appointments
- Out of hours provision
- Dignity and respect
- Continuity of care
- Patient information
- Prescription services

Research Tools

A survey was launched in April 2015 and ran until the end of August 2015. Surveys were completed using the following methods:

- Website
- E-news
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Community Engagement
- Events

A total of 129 surveys were returned.

Please note: patients were given the opportunity to skip any questions they did not wish to answer.

(Appendix 1 - Copy of GP Access and Out of Hours Provision survey results)

Reaching out to seldom heard groups

We worked in partnership with a group of adults with Learning Disabilities (LD) from Wrekenton Community Base.

The group held an open day where residents from the local community were invited to visit their new refurbished base within Wrekenton Community Hub. It was very well attended with over 60 people in the morning. This allowed us to gather views from Adults with LD and Carers.

Our offer of a free cream tea was very popular and residents were more than willing to complete our GP questionnaires supported by Healthwatch staff and volunteers.

This was also an opportunity for individuals to find out more about Healthwatch Gateshead and how they can have their say on shaping health and social care services locally.



Key Findings

Appointment systems

Same day appointments

There was a mixed response. The same surgeries come up for both difficult and easy to book appointments.

What patients did if they were unable to book same day appointments

From the 110 patient responses, 42 patients who could not book a same day appointment did nothing, 10 went to a Walk in Centre, 5 went to Accident and Emergency or phoned for an ambulance, 18 phoned the 111 number and the remaining 29 waited for the next available appointment.



“As I was unable to book a same day appointment I asked for a telephone call from a GP which I got pretty quickly. But resulted in me having to go and see them anyway”



What did patients do if they needed out of hours provision

From the 94 patient responses, 30 attended a Walk in Centre, 26 rang their GP, 18 rang the 111 number for advice, 8 went to Accident and Emergency, 3 phoned for an ambulance and 9 patients did nothing. 6 patients had not needed an out of hours appointment.

Booking appointments in advance

From the 124 patient responses, 91 patients said they were able to make advance appointments at their GP surgery, 16 said they were unable to make advance appointments and 17 patients were unsure whether their surgery allowed advanced booking.

Dignity and respect

How did patients feel they were treated by the receptionist at their practice?

From the 120 patient responses, 85 patients said their treatment was good to excellent, 24 said it was ok and 11 patients stated their treatment was poor to very poor.



“On more than one occasion the receptionist found a way for me to speak to, or see a doctor within a reasonable time”



Did patients feel they had enough time at the last GP consultation?

From the 123 patient responses, 104 patients said they felt they were given enough time at their last consultation to meet their needs, 10 patients said they did not feel enough time was given and 9 were unsure. Comments suggest this depends on the complexity of the issues.

Continuity of care

How important is it for patients to see the same GP at their practice?

From the 122 patient responses, 61 patients said it was important to them see the same GP at their practice, 43 patients said only sometimes, 14 patients said it wasn't important to see the same GP and 4 patients commented that this is important if they have an ongoing medical need.

Of those patients who said it was important to see the same GP, 56 patients said it was difficult or very difficult to get an appointment and 40 patients said it was easy or very easy. Other comments included booking in advance would ensure continuity with the same GP.

Requesting longer consultations with GPs

From the 125 patient responses 59 patients said they were unsure if they were able to book longer consultations, 40 said they were able to book a longer appointment and 26 said they could not book extended appointments.



“We have ongoing chronic conditions and have never felt hurried by Dr H”

“Haven't asked for this as it's difficult to get normal appointments”



Patient information

Patient Forums

From the 123 patient responses, 103 patients said they did not know if their GP practice had a patient forum, 17 patients said their GP Practice did have a patient's forum and 3 patients said their GP Practice did not have a patients forum.

GP Opening Hours

From the 124 patient responses, 80 patients said they did know the opening hours of their GP surgery, 26 patients did not know and 18 patients said they were unsure of the opening hours of their surgery.

Finding information on opening hours

From the 105 patient responses, 57 patients said they would phone their GP Practice, 32 patients would look on their GP website and 16 patients would use the following methods:

- notice boards (electronic and standard)
- leaflets and posters
- word of mouth

0 patients would use social media.

Prescription services

From the 97 patient responses, 89 patients required repeat prescriptions regularly and 8 patients required them occasionally.

How patients requested repeat prescriptions

From the 102 patient responses, 48 patients phoned their GP surgery, 21 patients did so via their pharmacy, 10 patients used the online service and 7 patients made an appointment to see their GP. The remaining 16 patients used GP reception or boxes provided in GP receptions.

Conclusion

Review of the information gathered by Healthwatch Gateshead demonstrates a variety of positive and negative experiences in using GP Services. "One size" does not fit all; therefore it is essential that a range of methods are available to access GP appointments.

Communication is essential to ensure that the general public are clear on the various ways they can make appointments and what services /options are available to them if an appointment is not available or if it is out of hours.

It is also important that patients are aware that they can request a longer appointment if they feel it is necessary.

Patients that have an ongoing medical need who perceive they may benefit from the continuity of the same GP should be able to book in advance appointments to ensure they are guaranteed essential ongoing support.

It is clear that patients have a lack of awareness of their surgery patient forums. Therefore it would be a positive initiative for some marketing to take place to raise awareness of the forums and their purpose. Healthwatch Gateshead could also play an active role in this, by bringing the information to the wider public.

Surgery Responses

Of the 31 GP Practices and 4 Branch Surgeries in Gateshead we received 2 responses.

Second Street Surgery

Has made several improvements in 2015 to develop Patient Experience which include:

- Improving telephone systems
- Improved on the day access - Appointments reserved for book on the day
- Providing telephone consultations
- Increased nursing appointments available - recruiting a Healthcare Assistant to support the Practice Nurse
- Improvements to manage long term conditions
- Improved patient participation

Birtley Medical Group

- Invite all new patients to join the patients forum, advertise on their website and in the surgery for forum members
- Produce a patient leaflet which includes opening hours and patient information
- Is a large practice with a lot of part time GP's. It is not uncommon that GPs may not be available on a day that a patient needs to see them

What next?

Gateshead Care Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee (CHWSC) – Review of Access to GPs 2015/16

The review is being jointly led by the Council, NHS England and Newcastle Gateshead NHS CCG. The report was presented alongside key findings from the recent NHS GP Patient Access survey at the evidence gathering sessions of the (CHWSC) in October and December 2015.

Healthwatch Gateshead would like to thank everyone that has supported and contributed to this key piece of work particularly; Patients in Gateshead that have spent time providing us with their experiences of their local GP, colleagues in Newcastle Gateshead CCG for their support and contribution to the project, colleagues in Gateshead Council that have supported us to present the evidence and recommendations at Care Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. This report has recently been referred to at Parliamentary level by the Public Accounts Committee.

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