

Snapshot Survey 2:
Haringey GP Surgeries
October 2015



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Haringey Race
and Equality Council



How our survey volunteers described the GP surgery staff they interviewed:



Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Healthwatch Haringey volunteers: Margaret Fowler, Chris Goodyear, Joanna Borat, Anne Odofin, Sally Kirkpatrick, Joyce Oyeyi-Effiong, Margot Ferris and Robert Nketia, who carried out our GP reception research and the fieldwork for the task. Thanks are also due to all practice staff who participated and engaged so positively in the process.

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is the independent statutory consumer champion set up to gather and represent the views of the public on health and social care services. By law a Healthwatch must be set up in every local authority in England.

Healthwatch Haringey

Healthwatch Haringey ensures that the views and experiences of local people who use services are taken into account. We monitor and work with the people who plan and run services to help them work better. We want all our diverse communities to be involved, and will work to ensure that the voices of all these communities are heard. Our aim is to give patients, service users and the public a powerful voice so that they can influence and challenge decision making in Haringey and help shape local health and social care services.

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Executive Summary

Data was collected from a total of 47 GP surgeries in 18 wards in Haringey, from the East, Centre and West of the borough. They were assessed on five key areas:

Customer care

- 40 out of 47 GP surgeries were observed to be 'Good' or above in their service towards Healthwatch visitors, indicating a willingness to assist with the snapshot survey.
- Of the 47 GP surgeries observed for their customer care, 36 of 47 (75%) were rated as 'Good' or better with customer care interactions, compared to 30 of 47 (64%) last year.

Feedback and complaints processes

- 29 of the 47 (60%) GP surgeries visited displayed complaints process on notice boards, although some of these were difficult to find or unclear. Nonetheless, there was an improvement on the percentage of surgeries displaying complaints processes in the January report (49%).
- GP surgeries markedly improved on their display of information related to the NHS Complaints Advocacy provider, VoiceAbility, with 28 of 47 (58%) GP surgeries displaying VoiceAbility posters or leaflets compared with 9 of 47 in the January report (19%).

Website analysis

- 36 of 47 (81%) GP surgeries had independent websites.
- The number of surgeries displaying complaints procedures on their own websites rose from 49% (23/47) to 77% (36/47).
- 27 of 47 (57%) GP surgeries allowed appointments to be made through their websites.

Patient participation groups (PPGs)

- 40 of 47 (85%) GP surgeries now have PPGs, compared to 35 of 47 (70%) in the January report.
- Some of these surgeries specified how frequently they were held, ranging from one yearly to once every two months.
- Problems associated with PPG activity included lack of patient interest and lack of staff available.

Translation services for non-English speakers

- 41 of 47 (85%) GP surgeries reported that they offer one or more translation services, including Language Line, internet translation and staff translation in a number of languages.

Support for people with deafness and hearing loss

- Several services were offered, such as BSL interpretation or induction loop systems, at different surgeries.
- 26 of 47 (54%) GP surgeries reported offering a BSL service, either through trained internal staff or Haringey Council. This was an increase on the 46% (22/47) compared to last year.

Introduction

In January 2015 Healthwatch Haringey produced a report on GP surgeries in Haringey which highlighted areas of strength and areas for improvement. This report follows on from the January report and provides quantitative and qualitative analysis of 47 GP surgeries in the borough in six key areas:

1. **Customer care:** Ensuring patients have a comfortable experience in each surgery, from the first response to Healthwatch Haringey representatives to observations of staff interactions with practice patients.
2. **Feedback and complaints process:** Ensuring patients have access to guidelines regarding feedback and complaints processes, and clear guidance on the NHS complaints advocacy, 'VoiceAbility'.
3. **Website analysis:** Analysing the information available on each GP surgeries' independent website, specifically related to complaints procedures and booking of appointments.
4. **Patient Participation Groups (PPG's):** Noting whether Patient Participation Groups have been set up and how active these groups are.
5. **Translation services for non-English speakers:** Checking that appropriate translation services are provided for non-English speakers.
6. **Support for people with deafness and hearing loss:** Checking that appropriate support is in place to assist patients with hearing loss to engage fully in the consultation process.

To explore these areas, Healthwatch Haringey representatives visited each of the 47 GP surgeries in Haringey and recorded their experiences of each one based on a single visit. Representatives recorded their observations; scoring items related to customer care on scales of 1-5, binary yes/no responses and opportunities to report observations in a qualitative manner. This report seeks to highlight areas for improvement and areas of strength in each of the six key areas using the data collected from the observations of the Healthwatch Haringey representatives. Some findings are compared with those from the previous report to identify any areas of service improvement, or deterioration, over the six month period.

Findings grid

Practice name and address	Service toward Healthwatch visitor	Service toward service users	NHS complaints advocacy, VoiceAbility, displayed?	Complaints procedure clearly displayed in poster or leaflet form?	Complaints process clearly visible on GP surgery website?	Appointment bookings available via website?	Patient Participation Groups (PPG's) present?	Non-family translation services offered?	BSL services offered?
Rutland House Surgery, 40 Colney Hatch Lane, N10 1DX	4	4	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
Grosvenor Road Surgery, 23 Grosvenor Road (Merging with Alexandra Surgery), N10 2DR	5	NA	-	NA	+	+	+	+	-
Dukes Avenue Surgery, 1 Duke's Avenue, N10 2PS	5	5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Queens Avenue Surgery, 46 Queen's Avenue, N10 3BJ	5	5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
The 157 Medical Practice, 157 Stroud Green Road (Merging with Dr. Nubi), N4 3PZ	4	4	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Highgate Group Practice, 44 North Hill, N6 4QA	4	4	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Crouch Hall Road Surgery, 48 Crouch Hall Road, N8 8HJ	5	5	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Park Road Surgery, 153 Park Road, N8 8JJ	4	4	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
The Vale Practice, 50-66 Park Road, N8 8SU	5	5	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Christchurch Hall Surgery, 20 Edison Road, N8 8AE	4	4	+	+	+	-	-	+	NA
The Queenswood Medical Practice, 151 Park Road, N8 8JD	4	4	-	-	+	-	+	+	+
Alexandra Park Rd Surgery, 125 Alexandra Park Road (Merged with Grosvenor Road Surgery), N22 7UN	5	NA	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Allenson House Surgery, Weston Park, Crouch End, N8 9TB	3	4	-	+	-	-	+	-	-
Bounds Green Group Practice, Gordon Road, N11 2PF	5	4	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
Arcadian Gardens, 1 Arcadian Gardens, N22 4RH	5	5	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
The High Road Surgery, Stuart Crescent Health Centre, 8 Stuart Crescent, N22 5NJ	4	4	-	-	-	-	+	+	NA
Westbury Medical Centre, 205 Westbury Avenue, N22 6RX	4	4	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
The Staunton Group Practice, Morum House Medical Centre, Bounds Green Road, N22 48E	4	4	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Evergreen House Surgery, 22 Cheshire Road, N22 8JJ	5	5	+	+	+	-	+	NA	+
Hornsey Park Surgery, 114 Turnpike Lane, N8 0PH	4	4	+	-	+	+	+	+	-
The Surgery, 625 Green Lanes, N8 0RE	4	NA	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Old Surgery, 572 Green Lanes, N8 0RP	4	4	+	-	+	-	NA	+	-

Practice name and address	Service toward Healthwatch visitor ¹	Service toward service users ¹	NHS complaints advocacy, VoiceAbility, displayed?	Complaints procedure clearly displayed in poster or leaflet form?	Complaints process clearly visible on GP surgery website?	Appointment bookings available via website?	Patient Participation Groups (PPG's) present?	Non-family translation services offered?	BSL services offered?
Stuart Crescent Health Centre, 8 Stuart Crescent, Wood Green, London, N22 5NJ	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Myddleton Road Surgery, 52 Myddleton Road, N22 8NW	5	4	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
Lawrence House Surgery, 107 Phillip Lane, N15 4JR	5	5	+	NA	+	+	+	+	+
Tynemouth Road Medical Practice, Tynemouth Road, N15 4RH	5	5	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
Park Lane Practice, 104 -108 Park Lane, N17 0JP	5	5	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
Broadwater Farm Health Centre, 2a Willan Road, N17 6BF	4	4	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Charlton House, 582 High Road, N17 6SB	4	4	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
Somerset Gardens Family Health Centre, 4 Creighton Road, N17 8NW	4	3	-	+	+	-	+	NA	+
Dowsett Rd Surgery, 57 Dowsett Road, N17 9DL	2	2	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
The Surgery, 618 Green Lanes, N8 0SD	4	4	-	+	-	-	-	+	-
Fernlea Surgery, 114 High Road, N15 6JR	1	1	-	-	-	-	+	+	-
Morris House Group Practice, Lordship Lane Health Centre, 239 Lordship Lane, N17 6AA	4	4	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
Bruce Grove Primary Health Centre, 461-463 High Road, N17 6QB	3	3	+	-	+	-	-	+	-
Tottenham Health Centre, 759 High Road, N22 6RS	4	4	-	-	+	-	+	-	-
Spur Road Surgery, 1 Spur Road, N15 4AA	5	4	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Philip Lane Surgery, 326 Phillip Lane, N15 4AB	5	5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
J S Medical Practice, 107 Phillip Lane, N15 4JR	5	5	+	+	+	+	+	+	NA
St John's Rd Surgery, 18 St Johns Road, N15 6QP	4	3	-	NA	-	-	+	-	-
Westbury Avenue, 26 Westbury Avenue, N22 6RS	5	5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Bridge House Medical Practice, 96 Umfreville Road, N4 1TL	4	4	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Havergal Surgery, 9-10 Havergal Villas, Green Lanes, N15 3DY	4	4	+	-	-	+	+	+	+
West Green Road Surgery, 339-41 West Green Road, N15 3PB	5	5	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
Hurley Chestnuts Park, The Laurels Healthy Living Centre, 256 St Ann's Road, N15 5AZ	3	3	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
The Laurels Medical Practice, The Laurels Healthy Living Centre, 256 St Ann's Road, N15 5AZ	3	3	-	NA	+	-	+	+	-
Grove Road Surgery, 1 Grove Road, N15 5HJ	5	5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Findings: Analysis

Customer care

GP surgeries were assessed on their approach to customers from two points of view, their reception to Healthwatch representatives, and the Healthwatch representative's observation of their customer interactions.

Service to Healthwatch representative

Representatives scored the service they received on a scale of 1-5, 1 representing 'Very poor' and 5 representing 'Very good' service. 40 out of 47 scored 'Good' or above, indicating a willingness to help from practice staff and a generally positive first response to the Healthwatch representatives.

Some comments:

- + "Polite and helpful."
- + "Friendly and welcoming"
- "I spoke to a receptionist who was not overly friendly."

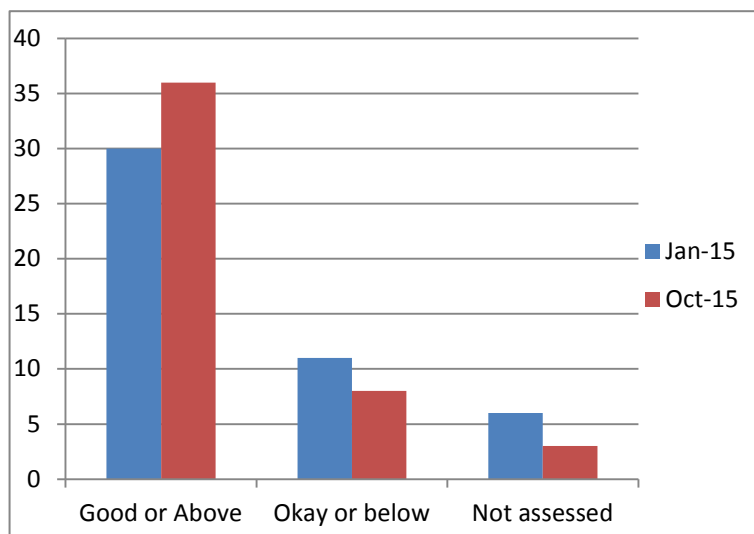
Healthwatch representatives reported the initial greeting from receptionists in an overwhelmingly positive way, with representatives reporting "polite", "helpful", "friendly" and "efficient" initial greetings. Some initial greetings involved Healthwatch representatives being told that the practice was particularly busy, and they were asked to return at another time, at which they were met with a "polite and helpful" response. A common theme of the services in the GP surgeries was how busy the surgeries were. One volunteer stated that the practice "looked understaffed", although they were unsure whether this was just a busy period, whilst another described the service as "very helpful despite dodging between phone calls and patients and doctor/nurses requests". There were some rare instances of less positive responses, with service on one occasion being described as "not very friendly".

Service to customers

Customer care in Haringey GP surgeries, as recorded on our visit, has generally improved since the previous survey. A comparison was drawn between the number of GP surgeries rated as 'Good' or 'Excellent' in the January report compared to responses of 'Good' or 'Very good' in this follow up report. 36 of 47 (75%) GP surgeries were rated as 'Good' or better with

customer care interactions, compared to 30 of 47 (64%) last year. This is a marked improvement and indicates an improvement in customer care (see fig 1).

Fig 1: Ratings of staff-customer interaction in January 2015 and October 2015 in each GP.



Some comments

- + "Patients were treated well and their individual needs were met."
- + "Friendly atmosphere as if they know each other."
- "Correct but not especially friendly."

Healthwatch representatives reported that overall the treatment of patients was generally very positive, with staff members across the surgeries being described as "efficient", "polite" and "friendly". One particularly good example of high standard customer service described the staff as ensuring "individual needs were met" with one particular member of staff displaying "an excellent rapport with patients". There were occasional instances of less positive service displays. There was an incident reported in which an elderly gentleman had apparently been waiting an hour and a half past his appointment time. 20 minutes after a hospital staff member complained on his behalf, the Healthwatch representative reported that the gentleman was still in the same place and they had not seen anybody speak to him. (It is important to note that this may have been a Whittington Community Health services appointment and not a GP appointment).

Recommendations:

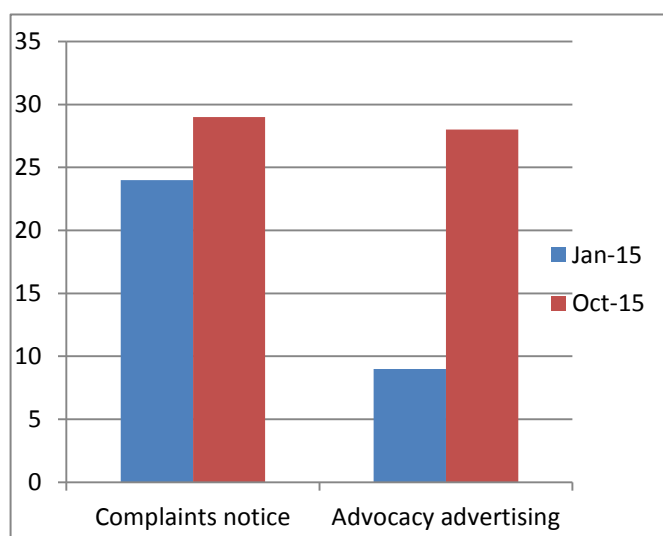
It appears that customer care has improved since the original snapshot survey, with the vast majority of Healthwatch representatives reporting this aspect of service as being "good" or above, with friendly, warm and polite staff being commonplace amongst GP surgeries in Healthwatch Haringey Snapshot Survey: Haringey GP Surgeries

Haringey. Nonetheless, there were a few occasions where less positive displays of customer care were displayed, and these need to be addressed.

Feedback and complaints processes

Healthwatch representatives were asked to note many aspects of the information available and displayed on the feedback and complaints process. This was highlighted as an area of concern in the previous snapshot survey, which reported that the patient's right to complain was not being communicated effectively. There was an improvement in the display of customer complaints procedures, either through leaflet form or posters. The display of posters or leaflets in the previous report was 22 of 47 (45%), and has risen to 30 of 47 (64%). However, of these 30 surgeries, 3 were deemed not be displaying information clearly. There was also a vast improvement on displays advertising the NHS complaints advocacy, VoiceAbility. 28 of 47 (58%) GP surgeries displayed posters or leaflets advertising VoiceAbility, compared with 9 of 47 in the January report (19%) (see fig. 2). Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement in this area.

Fig 2: Number of GP surgeries with complaints notices and advocacy advertisements observed in January 2015 and October 2015.



Some comments

- + "They had posters informing people how to make a complaint and good information on the walls."
- + "Complaints procedure clearly displayed on two different walls."
- "Not very easy to find."

The display of complaints procedures was noted across the vast majority of GP surgeries. These were mostly easily visible, with statements such as “very obvious” and “clearly displayed” used to describe the displays in two surgeries. However, there were issues with the displays in some surgeries. Several surgeries did not have complaints procedures described, instead encouraging the use of “suggestion boxes”. Others were noted as being “not very easy to find” or “well hidden”. One practice did not seem to have a complete copy, displaying only one page of a two page information guide.

Recommendations

Although many surgeries do advertise their feedback and complaints procedures, either with the availability of leaflets or display of posters, some still need to ensure that these are clear and visible for patients. This would enable GP surgeries to manage feedback and complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible, minimising the potential snowballing of problems. Furthermore, despite the fact many more GP surgeries are displaying information for the NHS complaints advocacy, VoiceAbility, we strongly recommend that GP surgeries in Haringey also clearly display information on how patients can give feedback or complain directly to the Practice Manager. We would also recommend that complaints processes are not considered as part of a suggestions box, and a separate procedure is developed and highlighted to address complaints, enabling accurate documentation.

Website analysis

Each GP surgery website was also assessed on the presence and ease of access to its complaints procedure (note: this is considered separate from a feedback or comments section). Nine surgeries were found to not have an independent website, or a fault with the website made it inaccessible. The number of surgeries displaying complaints procedures (not feedback), on their own websites rose from 23 of 47 (49%) to 36 of 47 (77%) (see fig.3 and fig. 4).

Fig 3: Number of GP surgeries with full details of their complaints process on their independent websites in January 2015 and October 2015.

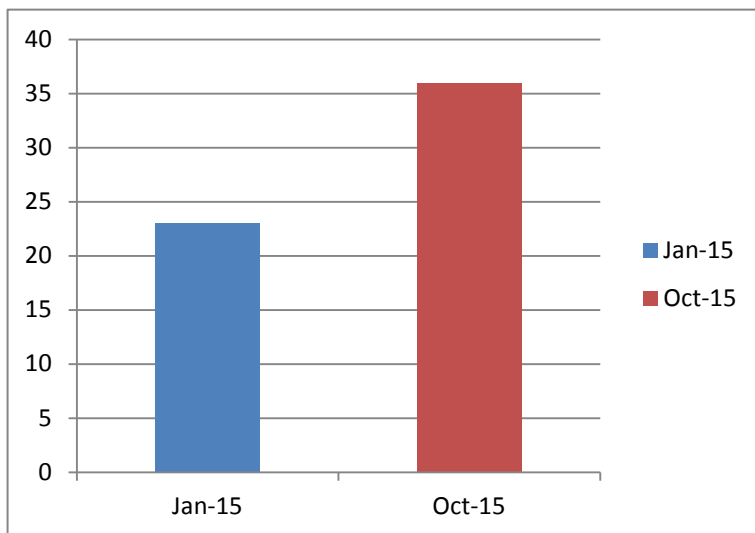
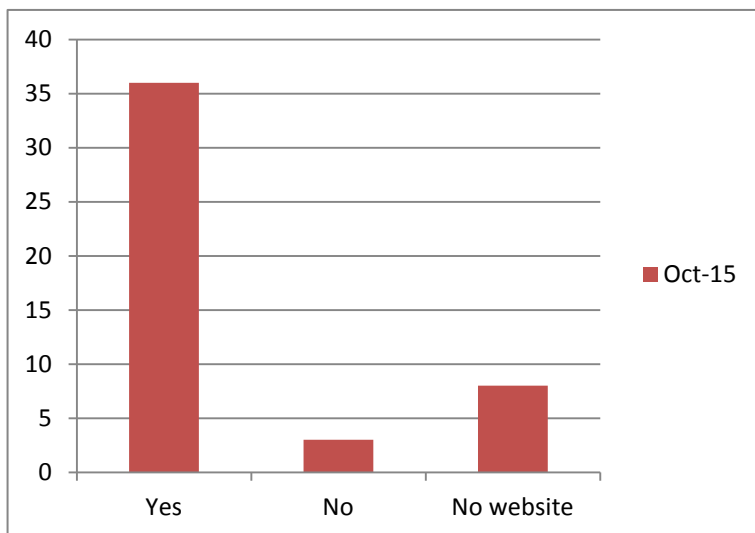
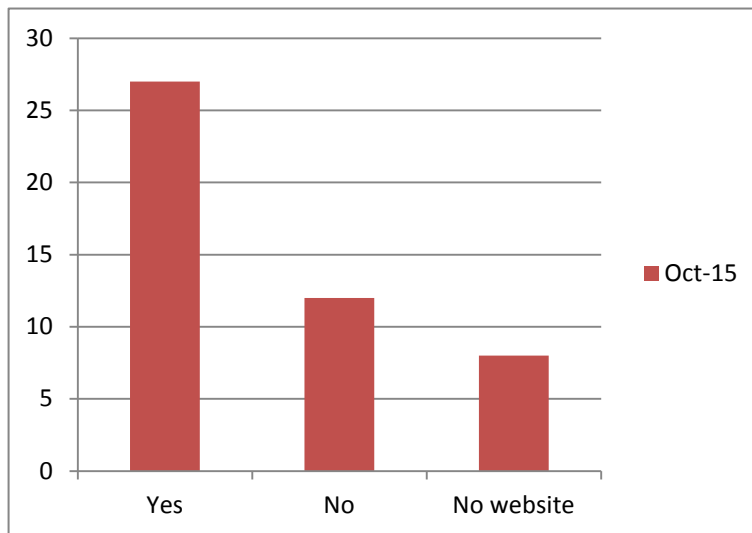


Fig 4: Complaints process information (not including feedback) on website in October 2015.



We found that only 27 of 47 (57%) of GP surgeries allowed appointments to be made through their websites (see fig. 5).

Fig 5: Number of GP surgeries allowing appointment bookings through website in October 2015.



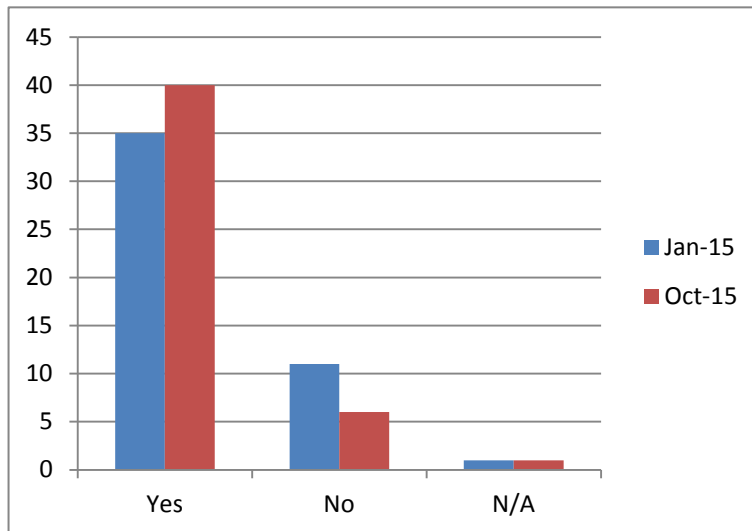
Recommendations:

Online methods of communication allow patients to access information with ease, as well as book appointments without need for contacting the surgery directly. It would be very useful if details regarding complaints processes were provided on practice websites. Since April 2015, all GP surgeries should facilitate online booking of appointments and it is surprising that 20 surgeries (43%) do not currently have this facility.

Patient participation groups (PPGs)

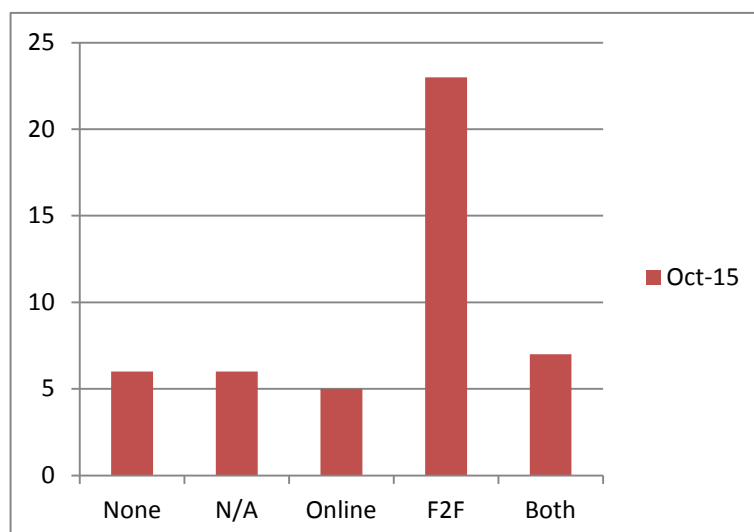
GP surgeries were assessed on the presence of PPGs. Discussions with surgery staff also highlighted some of the issues associated with sustaining PPGs as well as the level of activity. Our representatives found that 40 of 47 (85%) GP surgeries now have PPGs, compared to 35 of 47 (75%) in the January report (see fig.6).

Fig 6: Number of GP surgeries with PPG's in January 2015 and October 2015



Of the 40 of 47 GP surgeries that stated that they have PPGs, 23 of them indicated that they only held face-to-face only meetings (see fig. 7). We found that 37 of 47 surgeries also mentioned PPGs on their website.

Fig 7: Delivery format of PPG's in October 2015



Some comments

- + "The PPG has its own notice board."
- + "It has taken time to sort it out but they now have a group of 15 who meet for an hour on a Saturday morning."
- "Receptionist said that it was impossible to arrange"

The Healthwatch Haringey representatives found varying levels of PPG activity across the GP Surgeries in Haringey. One of the groups was extremely active, "well attended" and meeting every 4-6 weeks. Another surgery, which initially had problems forming a group, "now has a group of 15 who meet for an hour on a Saturday morning". Others had PPGs that were less active, meeting once annually. Some issues with PPG participation did arise, with some groups opting for online meetings as opposed to face-to-face meetings, with one of these being due to the fact that people were "not able to attend due to childcare and other stuff". The "great variation of languages spoken" in one surgery meant that face-to-face meetings often became one to one discussions. Another surgery stated that although they held meetings every three months, it was "very difficult to recruit and take up is not always a balance of ages/groups". Some PPGs had also started and failed for various reasons. One surgery noted that they tried to set up a PPG group on three occasions, "but patients just seem to be happy to be told and not to run the group themselves". They also noted a lack of staffing to be able to support the group, but stated they would try again.

Recommendations:

It appears that the formation and maintenance of PPG's is very specific to each GP practice, and GP surgeries may consider the demographic of its patients to determine what form of PPG delivery is most appropriate. This could also potentially be measured by gauging patient opinion through use of surveys, and determining what patients would find most helpful and appropriate. In particular, GP surgeries that have had difficulty forming a PPG could consider this technique to gauge why there are such issues and respond accordingly.

Since 1 April 2015, it is a contractual requirement for all English GP practices to form a patient participation group (PPG) and to make reasonable efforts for this to be representative of the practice population.

Translation services for non-English speakers

GP surgeries were assessed on their provision of translation services. This excluded the offer of the presence of family members, but included a variety of possible methods of delivery, including Language Line, use of internet and use of staff. We found that 41 or 47 (85%) GP surgeries reported one or more translation services offered, including Language Line, internet translation and staff translation in a number of languages. Only 4 GP surgeries (8%) reported an absence of translation services being offered. However, due to the fact that the previous report only considered the use of Language Line, it would be inappropriate to provide a comparison between the two time periods.

Some comments:

- + "The staff themselves cover a huge number of languages."
- + "Translation services allows double time of telephone appointments."
- "It takes quite a while to get connected up."

Many GP surgeries were noted for the array of languages they were able to translate to, utilising Language Line, Google Translate, Haringey Council services and staff translation. Many Healthwatch representatives remarked on the range of languages on offer, with one representative stating one surgery has a "huge number of languages available". Some GP surgeries offered more than one method of delivery - one representative stated that the practice they visited "they use Language Line via the telephone, face to face are booked at client's request." This range of methods used displays the adaptability of GP surgeries to meet patient needs. However, an issue may have been encountered with the use of Language Line - "it takes quite a while to get connected up" to the service according to one representative.

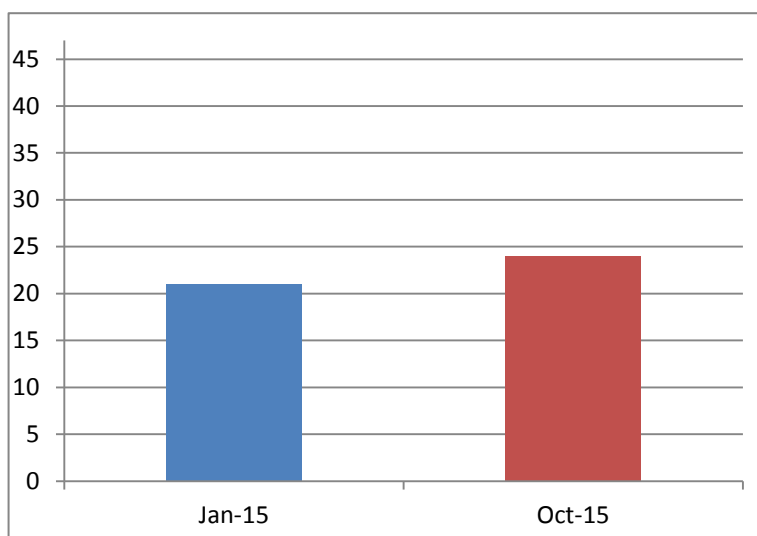
Recommendations

All GP surgeries should be aware of the use of Language Line and seek to use it where translation services are required. A 'pay-as-you-go' service, which can then be invoiced to the London office of NHS England, is available. The service is accessible 24 hours a day and is especially suitable for GP surgeries that do not offer the range of languages required through internal staff.

Support for people with deafness and hearing loss

GP surgeries were asked whether they offered British Sign Language (BSL) services for deaf patients in their surgery, either through face-to-face or video means. 24 of 47 (51%) surgeries reported offering a BSL service either through trained internal staff or Haringey Council. This was an increase on the 45% (21/47) that were capable of delivering the service (see fig. 8), but not as substantial as we would have expected. Many surgeries specified the use of other facilities to aid patients suffering from hearing loss, with 5 surgeries specified using a hearing loop.

Fig. 8: Frequency of GP surgeries offering BSL services in January 2015 and October 2015



Some comments

+ "they have a Hearing Loop and use BSL when appropriate and also offer a double appointment"

The quote above is an example of a surgery seeking to help patients with hearing loss or deafness in a variety of methods. One surgery reported a BSL fingerspelling alphabet poster in their surgeries and that patients are encouraged to write their questions. Referring to one GP surgery, a Healthwatch representative reported that "they are very interested in finding out about training for people so that they can use BSL in reception and elsewhere". Some surgeries stated that they didn't offer BSL and hearing loss service due to lack of patient demand, and others ask for the patient to arrange for a relative to attend. Several surgeries also highlighted the fact that alerts were documented on patient records to ensure that they are appropriately treated and to minimise misunderstandings.

Recommendations

There are examples of good practice in Haringey GP surgeries including the use of services available through the internet. Haringey CCG should support the roll out of good practice across all the GP surgeries in Haringey. It is interesting to note that webcams are being piloted by three GP surgeries in Islington.

In July 2015, Healthwatch Haringey conducted a focus group that considered the issues faced by deaf people in health and social care access. The research brought to light many issues deaf people face when attempting to access health and social care services including a lack of understanding as to what may be of assistance to them. One incident highlighted in the focus groups involved a GP's practice phoning a deaf patient to inform her that her appointment was cancelled via answering message. A suggestion made in the focus groups to avoid such miscommunication, and currently implemented across some of the GP surgeries in Haringey, is the use of alerts on patient's records to highlight the fact that a patient is deaf. This would allow GP surgeries to communicate via alternative means, such as e-mail or text message, as well as to avoid confusion within the practice due to audio communications of appointments. Participants in the focus group also indicated that frontline staff should be given deaf awareness training, and where possible, such training should be administered to health care professionals to ensure appropriate treatment of deaf and hard of hearing patients. Another suggestion was to implement a method of communication piloted in Islington, using webcams for sign.

Healthwatch representatives overall impressions of the surgeries

Healthwatch representatives were also asked their overall impressions of the surgeries and the changes observed in the GP surgeries since the last report. Feedback was generally positive with the following comments related to the GP surgery staff:

“The staff were very good when they spoke to us and were helpful, friendly and welcoming.”

“The staff are well trained and that could be seen in the way they were dealing with their clients.”

“The staff answered all my questions, and were very interested in raising the profile of their surgery.”

“I picked up from the Practice Manager and receptionist a lively interest in clients and in developing the service to meet their needs and requirements.”

These indicate a genuine staff interest in patients as well as an ability to deliver high quality customer care. Some Healthwatch representatives expressed extremely positive sentiments towards some of the surgeries they visited:

“Both of us would like to register with this GP based up what we saw.”

“We thought this would be a very good practice to go to.”

“It felt like a good practice to go to.”

However, there were some instances of less positive customer care; one representative stated:

“I had phoned a week earlier to say I hoped to come and was spoken to in a rather unfriendly way by the receptionist”

“Reception staff very poor. When I visited in October 2014 I was told they had teething problems. They still have them”

“Once again I walked in to a dispute between a patient and reception. Patient had been waiting for an hour through a misunderstanding.”

Summary

Overall, we are encouraged by improvements made since the last survey in the six areas of study for this report-, 'customer care', 'feedback and complaints processes, 'website complaints and e-booking', 'patient participation groups', 'translation services for non-English speakers' and 'services available for deaf patients and patients with hearing loss'. The displays of complaints posters and leaflets, including VoiceAbility are now a common feature of GP reception areas, though not yet in all of them.

Final recommendations

Customer care: Patient concerns and complaints should be dealt with as quickly as possible to minimize patient distress. A first response to patients is a key aspect of customer care: "polite", "efficient" and "friendly" service were seen as important markers of good customer care scores.

Feedback and complaints processes: Complaints processes must be displayed clearly to all patients, as well as available to obtain in the form of a leaflet and displayed on the practice website. Furthermore, VoiceAbility should also be clearly advertised to patients. Suggestion boxes should not be considered part of the complaints process and should be advertised as suitable for feedback only.

Website analysis: Where possible, GP surgeries may consider the use of websites for communicating important information to patients regarding making complaints, PPG related information and general information. The use of websites to book appointments is a requirement and should also be a helpful tool in reducing the workload of frontline staff.

Patient Participation Groups (PPGs): PPGs should be active and ongoing. GP surgeries struggling to start PPGs should consider ways to investigate the issues of starting and maintaining them. Obtaining patient feedback in the form of surveys would help to highlight such issues. Demographics and accessibility, especially to internet based PPGs, should be considered to ensure activity within the groups.

Translation services for non-English speakers: These services should be available in all GP surgeries and the use of family members is not good practice.

Support for people with deafness and hearing loss: There are examples of good practice in Haringey GP surgeries including the use of services available through the internet. Haringey CCG should support the roll out of good practice across all GP surgeries in Haringey.

Webcams for sign language are being piloted by three GP surgeries in Islington; we recommend that a trial be set up in Haringey.

Next steps

It was very clear from our volunteers that most GP surgery staff were very keen to receive feedback from our survey in relation to their services and to use this information to make improvements. We will produce a brief feedback report for each GP practice highlighting any areas for improvement and identify the parts of the service that seem to be working well. We think that most of our GP colleagues will be pleased with their results, reflecting their hard work and dedication to customer care.

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