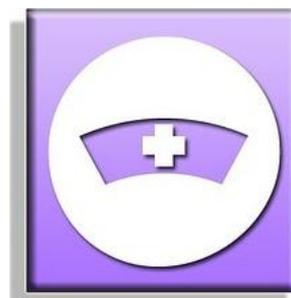


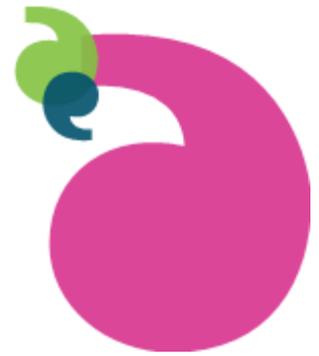
GP Access Report

December 2014

Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Background

Throughout 2013 Healthwatch Sutton members, along with members of the public, reported that they found accessing their GP increasing difficult, key areas of concern centred around GP opening days/times, out of hours services and the appointment systems. 'Access to GP's' was included in the Healthwatch Sutton work plan for 2013/2014.

Remit

Healthwatch Sutton planned to research previous similar pieces of work carried out by Local Healthwatch organisations and other organisations with a view to developing of set of questions that would help identify the areas where improvement was needed.

Methodology

1. A short survey was produced to collect feedback
2. The questions were created using a variety of different sources including GP national surveys, other Healthwatch GP access surveys and tailor-made local questions.
3. The survey was available on-line and hard copies were sent out if requested. The survey was also promoted through e-bulletins, newsletters, websites, social media and local voluntary sector organisations.
4. Healthwatch Directors, staff, volunteers and members promoted and supported completion of the survey through their connections and via meetings/ events/groups they attended (with particular focus on voluntary and community sector groups). This approach ensured that a high number of responses were received.
5. A report would be created with recommendations and sent to all relevant parties.

Key Findings

1. In some cases, when patients call to make an appointment they are asked to call back closer to the time or on the day they would like an appointment. Patients who were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery rated their overall experience of making an appointment more highly (85 out of 100) than those that had to ring back (53 out of 100). Please see Appendix C for an explanation of the scoring calculations. Patients who were able to get an appointment when they first contacted the surgery also rated their satisfaction with the system to book appointment higher (78 out of 100) than those who didn't have to call back (43 out of 100).
2. When asked to rate the convenience of their appointment, people of working age (18-64) rated the convenience of their appointment as 65 out of 100, whereas people of retirement age (65+) rated the convenience of their appointment as 70 out of 100.
3. When asked to rate their satisfaction with the system used to book appointments, people of working age (18-64) rated their satisfaction with the system used to book appointments as 58 out of 100 whereas people of retirement age (65+) rated the system as 75 out of 100.
4. When asked 'If you weren't able to get an appointment or the appointment you were offered wasn't convenient why was that?' 24% said that this was because they could not book ahead at their GP surgery. This feedback was also reflected in several comments received.
5. When asked 'If you weren't able to get an appointment or the appointment you were offered wasn't convenient why was that?' 30% of respondents said this was because there weren't any appointments for the day they wanted.
6. When asked to identify their preferred method to book appointments 17% said 'On-line', 9% 'By email' and 5% 'By text message'. This means that a total 31% would prefer to use methods other than 'By phone' or 'in person'
7. Respondents were asked to identify which methods they would happy to use to hold a consultation with a GP. If commonly available methods are removed from the equation (i.e. face-to-face appointments), 58% of respondents advised that they would be happy to hold a consultation over the phone, 16% by email and 12% via video call (Skype).
8. Comments clearly show a large degree of dissatisfaction with systems that require the patient to call in the early morning to make an appointment. Often this was an inconvenient time to call and patients were unable to get through due to the volume of calls. When they were able to make contact were not able to obtain an appointment on that day.
9. When asked which additional opening times would make it easier for them to see or speak to someone; 34% of respondents asked for additional opening time on Saturday with a further 21% asking for appointments after 6.30pm.
10. When asked if they would be happy to travel to another location locally and see a different doctor if they wanted a routine appointment on a Saturday or a Sunday, 53% of respondents stated that they would be willing to do so.

Recommendations

1. GP surgeries to put in place appointment systems that allow patients to make an appointment on their first contact with the surgery (urgent and non-urgent).
2. GP surgeries to ensure that appointments are available to cater for people of working age. Data shows more specifically that Saturday and later evening appointments are preferred.
3. GP surgeries to investigate working in partnership to provide GP appointments at the weekends (in rotation?) as many patients have shown that they would be willing to go to a different location and see a different doctor at weekends.
4. GP surgeries to put in place appointment booking systems that are convenient for people of working age (i.e. accessible out of normal working hours).
5. GP surgeries to ensure that patients are able to book well ahead (more than 48 hours in advance) as well as being able to make more urgent appointments.
6. GP surgeries that do not already have technology in place, to investigate on-line, email or text messaging systems to be used by patients to make appointments.
7. GP surgeries to allow consultations to be carried out over the phone when appropriate and investigate the use of email and video calling (Skype).
8. GP surgeries to change/remove systems that require patients to call in the morning to make an appointment.
9. GP surgeries to investigate possible improvements to the availability of parking at their surgery.

Next Steps

A formal response to the report will be requested from NHS England and Sutton CCG.

The report will be shared with GP practices (via Sutton CCG), Healthwatch England, local MPs, the London Borough of Sutton council (including Health and Wellbeing Board), the Patient Reference Group and the Care Quality Commission.

In light of the small number of responses relating to the out-of-hours questions, data will be shared with providers of the 111 service and SELDOC (who provide the out-of-hours doctor service for Sutton) and general response requested.

The report will be promoted to all Healthwatch Sutton members and others through all available channels.

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