



St Helier Hospital
Outpatient Report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
March 2016

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Background

Following analysis of our ‘What matters to you?’ (WMTY) feedback system, we identified that outpatient services had been chosen as the second most important area of health and social care for the residents of Sutton (sample of over 400 responses). We put together a project brief to investigate the areas of improvement that had been highlighted in the WMTY responses and liaised with Epsom and St Helier hospital to agree a practical methodology to capture patients’ views about outpatients.

Remit

To design and deliver a project to collect the views of patients using outpatients services. This data would then be analysed and key emerging themes used to develop recommendations for improvement.

Methodology

It was agreed that our Healthwatch ‘authorised’ volunteers would go to St Helier outpatient waiting areas and ask patients to share their experience. Patients were asked to complete two surveys (see Appendix A in the full report). One was completed while they were waiting (239 responses received) and the other was completed after they had left their appointment (83 responses mostly returned by post). The analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data led to a series of recommendations.

Key Findings and Recommendations

1. **FINDING** - Over 20% (1 in 5) of respondents stated that the hospital had changed their appointment to a later date.

RECOMMENDATION - To carry out an internal audit to find out what are the main causes are for the hospital changing appointments. Potentially, check if any particular clinics or care pathways have more difficulty keeping to original appointments than others. To use this information to see if any action can be taken to reduce appointment changes. Work with staff and Healthwatch to develop solutions.

2. **FINDING 1** - More than half of the respondents stated that they had to wait more than 15 minutes beyond their appointment time to be seen.

FINDING 2 - ‘How satisfied were you with the amount of time between arriving at the clinic and being seen for your appointment?’. Nearly a third of patients (32%) asked this question stated that they were not satisfied with the amount of time they had to wait to be called for their appointment. A further third were ‘to some extent’ satisfied and the final third completely satisfied. Waiting to be seen invoked the greatest number of negative comments from people who completed the survey. The full report contains 27 comments regarding delays.

RECOMMENDATION FOR IMPROVEMENT - Carry out an audit of various clinics to establish the most common reasons that have a negative impact on the amount of time patients have to wait beyond their given appointment time. Work with clinical teams and administrators to develop systems to mitigate these delays.

3. **FINDING** - Of those people who had an appointment delayed by more than 15 minutes over half advised that they had not been informed of the delay. Of those people who were informed of the delay, 58% said that they ended up waiting longer than they had been told they would need to. The comments received in response to 'If you were given any reason for the delay please enter the reason below' were also used to develop this recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION - Work across the Trust to put in place a universal system that more accurately and routinely informs patients of delays if/when they occur. Investigate potential 'service recovery' plans to be activated when a delay occurs.

4. **FINDING - Pharmacy** - There were no questions relating to pharmacy in the questionnaire, however, respondents have made several comments expressing their frustration with the Pharmacy at St Helier Hospital.

RECOMMENDATION - Re-assess patient experience of Pharmacy following recent changes. If issues still exist, investigate how other Trusts have put in place systems to reduce the amount of time that prescriptions take to be processed or develop systems to spread demand.

Commendations

1. **COMMENDATION** - Over 80% found it easy to change their appointment. Only one respondent stated that it was 'Not at all easy'
2. **COMMENDATION** - Less than 2% of those who needed time to discuss their health or medical problems felt that they did not have enough time. Of this group (i.e. removing those who 'did not want to discuss' from the equation), 82% said they 'definitely had enough time with a further 17% said 'to some extent'.
3. **COMMENDATION** - Only 1% of patients felt that they hadn't been involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care. There were no comments received relating to involvement in decisions.
4. **COMMENDATION** - Forty seven of the 122 comments received contained a positive statement reflecting a general overall appreciation for Outpatient services and gratitude for the service received.

Next Steps

1. To meet with key staff at Epsom and St Helier hospital to see what action can be taken to address the recommendations given.
2. To work with the Trust and provide any support required to help them improve these areas.
3. To share the report with Healthwatch England, Sutton CCG (including the Quality Committee), Health and Wellbeing Board and PPGs.
4. To monitor progress of any actions that arise as a result of this report.



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