

Walnut Tree Health Centre

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Response to Healthwatch Milton Keynes – GP Appointments and Registration in Milton Keynes:

Overview and What We Are Proud Of

Many thanks for sending us a copy of the report following your visit to our practice in February 2018. We were happy to accommodate the Healthwatch representative who spent some time early one afternoon talking to patients in our waiting room. This was during a relatively quiet period for the practice whilst only nursing clinics were being undertaken.

Most practices are run as independent businesses, usually under a Partnership model and therefore we will all operate differently but with the same purpose to provide good care to our patients. We acknowledge patient frustrations with accessing and understanding just how we all work and we are committed to improve this for our practice population. We work collaboratively where possible but each practice is ultimately responsible for their own systems.

Here at Walnut Tree Health Centre, over the past year, we have been (and continue to do so) undertaking a review of our appointment systems to shape the services we provide to the needs of our patients. We have been using resources from NHS England Time for Care Programme, looking at how other practices have made improvements and changes to the way they work.

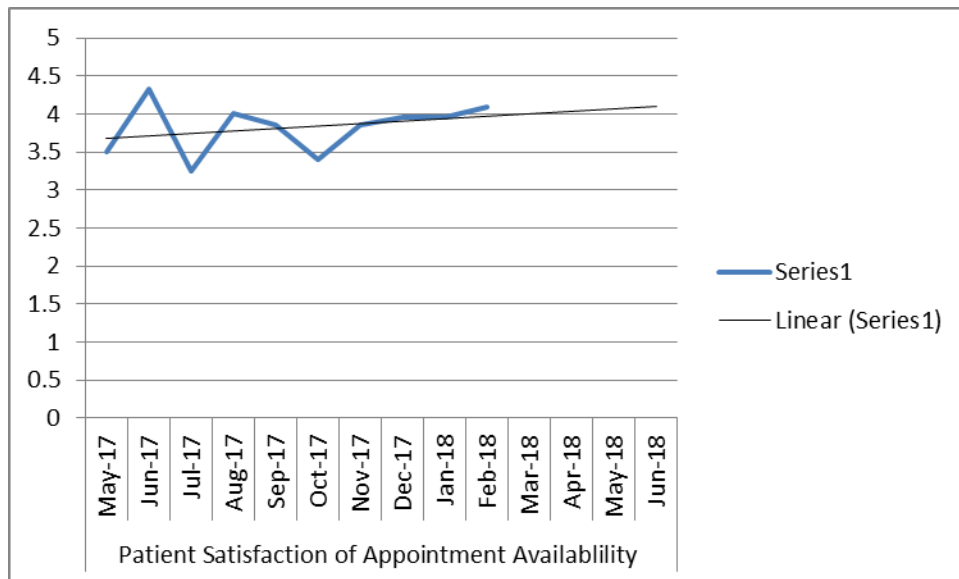
We have consulted with our staff, patients and PPG and each month we gather feedback and data that helps us to understand and modify our systems. In fact despite facing a cut of one fifth of our income we have been able to deliver more appointments for patients either face to face or via the telephone with a health care professional by changing the way we work.

We held a practice team meeting in June 2017 and at the meeting we agreed on the following aim:

“To improve patient satisfaction of appointment availability from 3.51 / 5 (01.05.2017 – 31.05.2017) to 4 / 5 by the end of September 2017” (as measured by the monthly I want great care questionnaires)

Since we started to change our appointment system in June 2017 we have seen patient satisfaction in our appointment system improve from a rating of 3.51 in June 2017 to 4/5 in February 2018. This has been achieved through listening to our patients and making small changes along the way. These include

- Employing an in-house physiotherapist and paramedic
- Increasing the volume of our telephone appointments
- Training our reception team to signpost patients to the right care first time – This has been through team meetings and training and CCG funded training
- Changing our recorded telephone message – it now recorded by one of our doctors who explains why we need information on the reason for the appointment
- Encouraging greater use of the online booking system
- Offering more appointments a day in advance



We continue to review, change and learn from these and share our learning widely throughout our networks.

In light of the review by Healthwatch and our own PPG led questionnaire earlier this year, during which the PPG interviewed 65 patients, we will now look at ways to improve our nursing appointment booking experience. Patients with ongoing care are offered bulk bookings of appointments (for example dressings) though we acknowledge the recommendations and will reflect on these. The difficulties we are likely to need to address will be the many nurse type appointments and the different time allocation needed dependant on the reason for the appointment as well as the eligibility to book these (for example flu jabs are not offered or funded universally for all patients). We also have different skill sets amongst our team. However we will discuss this as a team and also look at ways that other practices in England are overcoming these.

Most Practice Staff in Milton Keynes also live here and we are therefore also patients being served by the practices of MK. We work hard to provide the best possible care we can but with an average of £130 per year funding per patient we have to work hard and consider how we best deliver this care to our patients ensuring good, effective and safe care whilst working with a very limited budget.

With regards to the registration process we adhere to all relevant NHS England guidelines. We ask for ID to ensure we are registering the correct person and for address verification as we want to ensure we keep our services available to local residents by keeping our area local ensuring that when patients need us more (for example a home visit) this does not take time away, due to travelling, from other work commitments. We have a system in place that addresses registration when there is an inability to provide the documents we require and all staff are aware of this. We do not restrict the time of day that forms can be collected or dropped in although we may advise patients of our less busy times to manage our workflow and wait times.

Action Plan:

We continue to look at how we can improve the patient experience and address the workload issues of our team. In consideration of our ongoing work and the findings from the report our next steps will be:

1. Review our website to ensure up to date with current staff and services offered
2. Reflect on comments regarding Nurse appointment availability online and easier booking for patients who need continued use of service
3. Remind all registration staff on the guidelines for registering new patients