

28th March 2019

I welcome the opportunity to comment on Healthwatch's Spotlight on GP Services report. Patient feedback is invaluable in helping us to shape and improve services to ensure everyone has access to high-quality care.

We are concerned that the report doesn't give a fair representation of patients' views, given it reports on the views of 365 people across Kent and Medway when there are approximately 1.75 million people living in the area. It is also unclear which practices the feedback relates to, which makes it difficult to address those individual points.

However, I have addressed the broader concerns raised by the theme.

Appointments and waiting times

- In January 2019, there were 224 open GP practices that delivered 576,089 appointments across Kent and Medway. Of these appointments, 320,485 were with GPs while 252,446 were with other health professionals.
- Patients failed to attend approximately 4% of these appointments. 83% of these appointments were delivered face to face, 15% were via the telephone, and 2% were home visits.
- Across east Kent, there were 70 open GP practices that delivered 307,452 GP appointments; this represents approximately 53% of the total number of appointments across Kent and Medway.
- GP practices are facing increasing workload pressures. Many practices operate triage systems to manage patient demand and to allow the most appropriate clinician to be allocated to the patient. In many cases, this may be another advanced practitioner and not a GP.
- Using GP Forward View investment, the CCGs have worked with practices to run workflow optimisation training to help practices free up GP time.

Quality of treatment

- The Care Quality Commission undertakes an inspection of all GP practices, allocating a rating on their findings. The inspection addresses five key questions to determine if the service is safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led. Practices are then given a rating of outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate.
- Across east Kent, the majority of practices are rated in the top two categories. Eight practices are rated as outstanding, 56 rated as good, two practices rated as requires improvement and four practices rated as inadequate. The CCG is working hard with those six practices to ensure they have the support they need to make the necessary improvements.

Staff attitudes, medicines management and prescriptions

- The report focuses on the time period between April 2017 and November 2018. We anticipate that any patient complaints would have been reported to the practice or to NHS England and resolved by now.
- Our Medicines Management Team undertakes an annual programme of practice reviews, ensuring practices are adhering to the latest guidance.

Changes to GP services

- Primary Care Support England (PCSE) is responsible for processing patient records when patients change practices. We know there is a national issue with PCSE processing patient records in a timely manner.
- The east Kent Primary Care Co-commissioning Committee (PCCC) is responsible for all decisions in relation to the commissioning of primary care. The committee is supported by a number of operational groups that help to formulate proposals. Since the PCCC formed in September 2018, there has been an open invitation to Kent Healthwatch to attend and we note that Healthwatch attended the March PCCC meeting which enables timelier sharing of patient feedback.
- We would also encourage Healthwatch to liaise with our Lay Members for Public Patient Engagement.

Access to GPs

- Across the four east Kent CCGs, an improved access to general practice initiative was implemented from October 2018 onwards which is accessible to patients weekday evenings until 8pm, weekends and bank holidays. To the end of January 2019, 69% of appointments were booked with a 91% attendance rate.
- Generally the Healthwatch Spotlight Series GP Services presents a much less positive picture on access when compared to the GP Patient Survey, which says:
- Nationally
 - 84% of patients described their overall experience of their GP practice as good (Ashford 83%, Canterbury & Coastal 88%, South Kent Coast 82%, Thanet 80%)

- 69% of patients described their overall experience of making and appointment as good (Ashford 68%, Canterbury & Coastal 76%, South Kent Coast 68%, Thanet 63%)
- 96% had confidence and trust in the last healthcare professional they saw (Ashford 95%, Canterbury & Coastal 97%, South Kent Coast 95%, Thanet 95%)
- 70% said that they found it easy to get through to their practice by phone (Ashford 67%, Canterbury & Coastal 76%, South Kent Coast 67%, Thanet 48%)
- 90% found the receptionists at their practice helpful (Ashford 91%, Canterbury & Coastal 92%, South Kent Coast 90%, Thanet 88%)
- 94% of patients were satisfied with the type of appointment they were offered (Ashford 92%, Canterbury & Coastal 96%, South Kent Coast 94%, Thanet 94%).

I hope you find this update useful and I look forward to seeing you at the next PCCC meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Bill Millar
Director of Primary Care
East Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups