

NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group
Wharf House
Medway Wharf
Kent
TN9 1RE
Tel: 01732 375200
Email: westkent.ccg@nhs.net

26 April 2019

Dear Steve

NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) welcomes 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.

Although we are concerned that the report doesn't give a fair representation of patients' views (as it reports on the views of 365 people across Kent and Medway when there are approximately 1.75 million people living in the area) and it is also unclear which practices the feedback relates to (which makes it difficult to address those individual points) we have addressed the broader concerns raised in your report, by theme (below).

In addition, we are also looking separately at the details of the issues that have been identified in west Kent and are currently working our way through them.

- 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 four per cent of these appointments. 83 per cent of these appointments were delivered face to face, 15 per cent were via the telephone and two per cent were home visits.
- Across west Kent, we currently have 55 GP practices that deliver GP appointments to around half a million patients. Using GP Forward View investment, the CCG has worked with practices to improve care by running workflow optimisation training to help practices free up GP time, as well as other initiatives including: Signposting, First Contact Practitioner, Cluster-based home visiting paramedics, Cluster-based clinical pharmacists, Cluster-based Patient Education Networks and Cluster-based Complex Health needs coach. In west Kent, we have actively engaged with GPs, the practice, Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) and the Federation to improve: workforce; workload; premises and infrastructure; as well as developing new models of care.

Quality of treatment

- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) 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.
- As at December 2018, the vast majority of GP practices (47) in west Kent were rated as 'good' and two are rated as 'outstanding' by the CQC.

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 adhere to the latest guidance. We work with GP practices and hospitals to make sure our patients are prescribed the right medicines. As we move into the digital age, we are working with GP practices across west Kent to continue increasing the:
 - a) Electronic Prescribing Service (EPS)
 - b) Electronic Repeat Dispensing (eRD).

The benefits of EPS are that prescribers can process prescriptions more efficiently and spend less time dealing with prescription queries and more time with patients.

eRD allows regular medicines to be prescribed for suitable patients in batches of up to year and stores the prescriptions securely.

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 west 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 for Kent Healthwatch to attend the PCC meetings and share patient feedback.
- We also encourage Healthwatch to liaise with our Lay Members for Public Patient Engagement.

Access to GPs

- In October 2018, the national Improved Access Scheme was rolled-out in west Kent to give patients greater access to GP appointments including: weekday evenings until 8pm, weekends and bank holidays. On average, we now offer 1,300 extra patient appointments in our improved access clinics across west Kent, in addition to the regular core hours that

are available.

- As we respond to your report, we can confirm that we are currently in the process of asking patients what they think about the new improved access. Details of this evaluation will be available in the summer.
- We are also working with our practices to reduce GP workload and improve the patient experience. The CCG has developed many pilot programmes:

The paramedic home visiting service means paramedics can carry out home visits in Maidstone. This frees up GPs to see other patients in the practice. Another pilot helps to support GPs with their care home patients, with an additional pharmacist in Tunbridge Wells. This means that GPs can spend more time seeing patients and those patients requiring home visits have access to the right clinicians to support their care.

Many patients who have a musculoskeletal (MSK) condition, which can affect the joint, bones and muscles, can be seen sooner within GP practices. An extended scope physiotherapy practitioner with enhanced skills is a valuable resource for practices for managing patients in terms of diagnosis, management and treatment plans and will be able to refer to social prescribing services and promote self-care.

In December 2018, three GP clusters in west Kent introduced this new role to general practice to improve access to GP services and shorten waiting times. First contract practitioners were introduced to provide patients with faster access to the right care. They are qualified autonomous clinical practitioners who are able to assess, diagnose, treat and discharge a person without a medical referral – where appropriate. They are accessed directly by ringing their local surgery, where practice staff will book them in, if this is the right healthcare professional for their condition or symptoms.

GP receptionists and administrative staff across west Kent have now all been trained to become care navigators. This means that patients can contact their practice where a qualified care navigator will ask them a few questions to see what kind of help and support they need. Since the service was rolled out, patients have been signposted to a number of places such as: community pharmacies, orthopaedic physiotherapy, nurse practitioners, psychological therapies and the third sector (Age UK). Almost all the people (93%) that have been signposted to another service have taken up the offer. With an extra 150 appointments available each week, patients now have more access to health and social care services than ever before.

All these services have been developed working with local patients. I hope you find this information useful and, as we strive to shape and improve services, we look forward to working with Healthwatch to make sure that everyone has access to high quality care that they deserve.

Yours Sincerely



Gail Arnold

Deputy Managing Director (DGS and Swale CCGs) and Portfolio Lead Primary Care and Medicines