

Irchester Health Centre Patient Survey Report

1. Introduction

In October 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire visited Irchester Health Centre, near Wellingborough, as part of a county-wide survey of GP practices. The survey aimed to find out about access to services, the patient experience, good practice and what pressures there are within the practice. A summary report of the findings from the county-wide survey, including good practice and recommendations, is available on our website¹.

We spoke to four patients at Irchester Health Centre about their views, experiences and satisfaction. By speaking to patients face to face we could add depth to the findings of the National GP Patient Survey². We also spoke to the practice manager to find out about services currently being provided, how they are accessed, what they felt worked well and what pressures there were. The questions used are in Appendix 1 and 2.

All information and figures quoted below were correct at the time of the site visit. This report does not reflect any changes or improvements to procedures since that date.

2. Practice information

2.1 Practice size and staffing

Irchester Health Centre is a small-sized practice (approximately 4,500 patients) with three doctors, one part-time practice nurses and one health care assistant/phlebotomist. There is another surgery in Finedon belonging to the practice. No GPs are nearing retirement age and there are currently no vacancies.

2.2 Services provided

The practice provides a range of services, including; minor surgery, minor injuries, blood tests, aspiration, vasectomy, family planning, contraception, cervical smears, hydrocortisone injections, ear syringing, maternity clinics, health visitor - includes child health.

The surgery deals with minor injuries to try to avoid sending patients to A&E whilst more serious cases have to be sent to hospital usually via A&E.

¹ www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/about/docs

² <http://gp-patient.co.uk>

The practice provides services including; disability health checks, medication reviews and blood tests at two local residential care homes and one nursing home.

Specialists: No specialist staff were mentioned.

Shared services: Other surgeries send people to this practice for vasectomy and some patents are sent to other practices where other facilities are available, e.g. aural toilet.

Extended opening: None at the time of asking - the practice manager expected that all surgeries will have to open from 8am until 8pm in future.

Home visits: Requests for home visits are triaged by the nurse practitioner and allocated to a doctor. The practice does its best when a patient asks for a specific doctor and all home visits are made from 2 to 3pm between the two surgery sessions.

2.3 Appointment booking system

Appointments can be booked either in person or by telephone. The practice hopes to introduce an online system and is also looking at sending text reminders.

Missed appointments

There are some problems with did-not-attends (DNA) but not as many as there used to be. If patients DNA persistently they are sent a letter or invited to meet with the Practice Manager. The practice has not taken any of their patients off their list to date.

2.4 Patient Participation Group (PPG)

A small patient group exists which was chaired until recently by the Practice Manager and the group has not been very active. A newly appointed Chair took over in November 2014 and there were also two potential new members. The Practice Manager hopes for more involvement and enthusiasm in future.

2.5 Complaints system

Complaints are dealt with and encouraged by to meet with the Practice Manager, who finds that in most cases things can be resolved. More serious complaints would also involve a GP meeting with the patient concerned.

2.6 Equality and Diversity

We asked the practice about their equality and diversity policy and how the practice met additional needs of patients. The following were mentioned:

- wheelchair access is good - a lift for upstairs appointments
- Irchester is not culturally diverse resulting in little demand for translation services.
- whilst patients with disabilities are very much part of the Practice, physical space is limited and not easy for wheelchairs but can be managed

3. Patient experience

3.1 Appointment system

Half of the patients (two) we spoke to found it easy to book an appointment when they needed one. One person found it 'OK' and one thought it difficult.

- Two people said they had to wait if they wanted to see their preferred doctor.

3.2 Choice of doctor

Two people said they were usually able to see the doctor of their choice and two people were not but said it did not matter to them.

- One person said that it was important to them to see the same doctor because of continuity of care.
- One person said that they were happy to see anyone.

3.3 Treatment and quality of care and service

All the patients we spoke to said that they were always (three) or usually (one) satisfied with the treatment and service they receive. When asked to tell us more:

- One person said that there were no problems and that they were "always happy".

We also asked patients what they thought works well or could improve the quality of care. All four people commented:

- One person suggested a drop-in facility.
- One person would prefer to see the same doctors rather than locums.
- One person thought opening hours could be extended to suit shift workers.
- One person would like shorter waiting times once at the surgery.

3.4 Communication and additional needs

None of the patients we spoke to have had any problems communicating with doctors or other staff.

We also asked if any of the patients had any additional needs that required support (such as hearing or visual impairment, learning or physical disabilities, English as a second language) and whether their needs were met. Two of the patients we spoke to had additional needs and both were having these needs met. One person had a visual impairment and the other preferred not to discuss their personal situation but did say that they were well cared for.

3.5 Additional comments

We asked patients if they had any other comments to make about the practice. There were two additional positive comments and no additional negative comments.

Positive:

- One person was “happy with surgery”.
- One person said the staff were “very good and helpful”.

We also asked the Practice Manager if they were any more issues, pressures or examples of good practice that they wanted to tell us about:

Issues/pressures

The lack of an office means that the kitchen has to be used if privacy is needed with a visitor. The shortage of space restricts the services that can be offered and there is no room to expand other than building on the small car park.

4. Highlights

According to the results of both our patient survey and the National GP Patient Survey the practice’s appointment booking system is working well as most of the patients said they managed to get an appointment when they needed one, although they have to wait longer to see their GP of choice. Everyone we spoke to were either always or usually satisfied with their service and treatment at the practice, although did have some suggestions for improvement.

5. Recommendations

1. Patients may benefit from the practice having some specialist GPs.
2. The practice could consider ways of enabling more patients to see their doctor of choice and providing extended opening hours to help people see a doctor outside of their working day.
3. We hope the PPG developments have been successful and encourage the practice to look at how to get patients more involved if not.
4. We carried out deaf access mystery shopping at 5 of the 25 practices we visited across the county and have found the access and provisions for deaf and hard of hearing patients could be improved. Whilst we did not specifically assess this practice for deaf awareness and access we recommend that the practice carries out a self-assessment of their deaf access and shares the findings with Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Deafconnect with a view to improving deaf access and awareness.

6. Thanks and acknowledgements

Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank the Practice Manager of Irchester Health Centre for taking the time to talk to us and facilitate our visit, all the patients who were willing to take part in our survey and the Healthwatch Northamptonshire volunteers who visited the practice.

Appendix 1 - Patient survey questions

Q1: How easy is it to get an appointment when you need it? (Please tick one) <div> <div>Very easy</div> <div>Easy</div> <div>OK</div> <div>Difficult</div> <div>Very difficult</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>				
Q2: Please tell us more about your experiences of getting an appointment, <i>including how it is easy or difficult, how long you have to wait to get an appointment, and whether the system works well for you:</i>				
Q3: Do you usually get to see the doctor/nurse/health professional of your choice? <div> <div>Yes</div> <div>No, but I'd like to</div> <div>No, but it doesn't matter to me</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>				
Please tell us more about how this is important to you or not:				
Q4: Are there any problems when communicating with staff or doctors? <div> <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>				
Please tell us more:				
Q5: Are you satisfied with the treatment and service you receive here? <div> <div>Yes, always</div> <div>Yes, usually</div> <div>No</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>				
Please tell us more:				
Q6: What do you think could improve the patient experience at your GP practice and what do you think works particularly well? <div> <div>Improvements:</div> <div>Works well:</div> </div>				
Q7: Do you have any additional needs that require support? Such as hearing or visual impairment, learning or physical disabilities, English as a second language, etc. <div> <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>				
If so, are they met? <div> <div>Yes</div> <div>No</div> <div>Don't Know</div> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>				
Please tell us more:				
Q8: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?				

Appendix 2 - Practice Manager survey questions

<p>Q1: What is the staff makeup of the surgery (+ see briefing)? Do you have any nurse practitioners / prescribers and do you provide a mental health service? <i>E.g. Have there been any changes to the surgery staff since the briefing? What are they? E.g. Which staff provide mental health care and advice?</i></p>
<p>Q2: Have you any GP or staff vacancies? How long have these posts been vacant?</p>
<p>Q3: How does your appointment booking system work? (only need to ask about what is different to the briefing) <i>E.g. the role of the receptionist, whether there is online booking, how far in advance patients can book appointments, how much choice patients have over time and GP, whether they use an 0845 number, how many phone lines they have, telephone triage? What do you do with temporary or unregistered patients?</i> Have any significant patient criticisms of the appointment system been reported by the PPG and how have these been addressed?</p>
<p>Q4: Does the practice conduct home visits? <div style="text-align: center;"> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> </div> How are these organised?</p>
<p>Q5: What additional facilities does the practice have? (only need to ask about what is different to the briefing) (E.g. specialist clinics, counsellors, blood tests, specialist doctors, dressing changing facilities, drop in sessions) Do you share facilities with any other GP practices in your locality? Or does your practice or GP cluster have any specialisms/clinics or specialist doctors? If so, what and is this working? Would you like to see any more? Is there anything else working well in your locality? Are there any plans for further sharing of resources?</p>
<p>Q6: Does your practice have any extended opening hours or do you plan to (if not mentioned in briefing)? Has this been requested by your PPG?</p>
<p>Q7: Is the 111 Service prominently advertised by the Practice and does the service provide adequately for your patients and for their out of hours requirements? (Also see PPG and Patient Surveys and Reports)</p>
<p>Q8: Do you have an active patient engagement group? How is advertised and how can people join? Is it funded by the practice and how often do they meet? (Other than what is mentioned in the briefing)</p>
<p>Q9: Where is your complaints system publically displayed? <i>E.g. Is it in the patient information leaflet, noticeboard, reception desk?</i> How are complaints dealt with?</p>
<p>Q10. How else do you communicate with patients? <i>E.g. noticeboards, leaflets, website, guidelines about best times to call</i></p>
<p>Q11: What is your equality and diversity policy? How is it implemented? E.g. How provide access for those with physical, visual, hearing, and/or learning disabilities and autism and non-English speakers. BSL/interpreters? Is there staff training or understanding of obligations?</p>
<p>Q12: What other staff training does your practice have? <i>What decision aids/training are receptionists given?</i></p>
<p>Q13. Are there more patients attending your practice than there used to be? Have you any thoughts on why that is or why there is pressure on GP practices?</p>
<p>Q14: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about? E.g. things that are working well, challenges the practice faces, additional support needs they have, thoughts about A&E attendance, etc.</p>