

Telford and Wrekin
Health & Wellbeing Board Item 8
Thursday 28 November 2024
Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin GP Access Report 2024

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Supporting documents:

- Set of summary slides to detail report and actions to date **Item 8a**
 - Full copy of GP Access Report **Item 8b**
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Recommendations for Health and Wellbeing Board

1. To accept the report and the 15 recommendations made by Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin to improve people's access to GP services.
2. To expect Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board, Telford and Wrekin Council and Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin to continue to work together to improve peoples access to GP services within Telford and Wrekin.
3. To require updates to be presented at six monthly intervals with details of progress to improve access.

Introduction

The issue of seeing a GP has become for many people in Telford and Wrekin challenging. The way that national surveys present their data at what are called PCN (Primary Care Network) levels which can mask the lower levels of satisfaction with certain surgeries and only raises further frustrations.

These frustrations can be for people trying to get appointments and the people providing other services that rely on primary care services to support people as well as those acting as their elected representatives as they are told, many, many times how difficult it is. To continually hear that your services aren't that bad, due to the statistics of neighbouring areas clouding the reality on the ground for local people, fuels the perceptions and experiences that access is going to be poor.

Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin had been receiving people's stories regarding their access to GPs across Telford and Wrekin, many of these were negative, and was at odds with the national survey results. Similarly, so had Telford and Wrekin Council. It made sense to work together to promote the GP Access Survey jointly to give as many people as possible from Telford and Wrekin the chance to have their voice heard in relation to their experiences.

The survey received over 9,200 responses about GP Access. There is a danger that given the high levels of dissatisfaction that this report could have become an angry

response focusing on negativity. Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin have tried to present a balanced view based on everyone's views including experiences which are positive.

Findings

Many people express frustration when it comes to their experiences of trying to access primary care, be that in its simplest form of trying to visit their surgery and speak to the reception team, but being denied this and told to phone instead, through to people trying to use online services and commenting why bother as there are never any appointments there, or the effort to actually get through to surgery by phone after repeated attempts only to then face a lengthy wait of up to an hour or more in a queue and be told there are no more appointments available and to phone back tomorrow.

Not everyone is aware of the range of appointment options or how Primary Care Networks are designed to operate.

There are multiple examples of people considering the staff members receiving and answering phone calls at surgeries to have little empathy or compassion and often describe them as rude and abrupt.

The accompanying full report has turned into a short novel length affair. We make no apology for that as we feel it is important to provide, a succinct as is possible representation of the feelings and experiences of people who took the time and trouble to respond to this survey.

Reassuringly once people have actually got to the appointment their experience becomes more positive in the support, care and treatment they receive from primary care team members of different roles. Although for some this is not always the case.

People have readily commented on changes already made in their surgeries or lack of them and suggested how things can improve along with sharing their final thoughts on their experience in the last question.

Reports Recommendations for improvement

Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin have made 15 recommendations for improvement based on what people reported within the survey.

Next Steps

Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin could have simply made the recommendations to improve people's experiences in accessing primary care on the back of a report focusing on just the negatives and not seeking to understand the issues behind peoples comments. Similarly, we do not simply wish to publish and move on to other work. We feel it important to stay the course and continue with work to understand in more detail the issues people feel need improving and then how to see improvements made at each practice with next two phases.

GP Access Report Phase 2

Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin will produce an individual report for each GP surgery from the main overall report and the supporting survey responses. This will be focused and include full details of all peoples comments.

Follow on Phase 3

However, rather than just publish our main and individual reports with recommendations and leave it at that we will be offering to work with each GP Surgery and their PPG (Patient Participation Group) to address the findings of their individual report to develop an action plan to address our recommendations.

Where there isn't an active PPG we will offer to support the creation of one issuing joint promotion with the Surgery to recruit people. The aim is to address the areas people identify as poor and find common ground with the Surgery directors / senior partners to address and improve services thereby improving Patient/Primary Care relationships.

Or in cases of good areas of satisfaction explore what Surgeries have done to achieve this and use to create a toolbox for other Surgeries to 'dip into'.