

Derbyshire Health & Wellbeing Board

January 2023

1. About Us

Healthwatch Derbyshire is an independent voice for the people of Derbyshire. We are here to listen to the experiences of Derbyshire residents and give them a stronger say in influencing how local health and social care services are provided.

We listen to what people have to say about their experiences of using health and social care services and feed this information through to those responsible for providing the services. We also ensure services are held to account for how they use this feedback to influence the way services are designed and run.

Healthwatch Derbyshire was set up in April 2013 as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and is part of a network of local Healthwatch organisations covering every local authority across England. The Healthwatch network is supported in its work by Healthwatch England who builds a national picture of the issues that matter most to health and social care users and will ensure that this evidence is used to influence those who plan and run services at a national level.

2. Work Currently Undertaken

GP Access Report

The ways in which patients access their GP services is changing, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated many of these changes but even prior to the pandemic many GP's were increasingly offering a wider range of ways to access their services.

Face to face appointments are traditionally how many patients would access their GP, however this is not the only option available, and for some patients and their individual health concerns, alternative appointments may be more suitable and even preferable for their lifestyle.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, GP surgeries offered alternatives to face to face appointments that included access to care moving to a triage system, online bookings, and video and phone consultations.

Part of the role of Healthwatch Derbyshire (HWD) is to understand the experience of people using these services and to give people the opportunity to speak up and have their voices heard. Collecting feedback and providing opportunities for people to share their experiences with HWD means that we often hear about the issues and difficulties people face. As services started pandemic recovery and a level of normality returned, patients were contacting us with their frustrations at not being able to access face to face appointments. The perception from some patients appeared that they expected GP services to be delivered in the same way as before the pandemic.

The comments that HWD was hearing from patients prompted us to carry out some further work in gathering feedback to give an impression of people's experiences of accessing GP appointments.

Throughout Summer 2022 Healthwatch Derbyshire ran a survey to hear from patients, carers, and the wider public, offering an opportunity to share their views and recent experiences of accessing their GP. Feedback from the survey will help local health providers to understand how the ways in which appointments are accessed affects patients.

Over 1300 responses were received to the survey. The final report, findings and recommendations were shared for a commissioner response, with the full report published on 16th January 2023.

As part of the survey, we were able to identify the top five factors that make the most difference when things go right, as well as where they could be improved.

The responses were identified within different categories of the most frequently occurring themes and feedback. The five most common responses, in order of majority, as to ‘what was good about your appointment’ were:

- Compassion is shown during the appointment
- Telephone appointment is appropriate, convenient, and met the person’s need
- Responsive – the practice/staff member/health professional responds to questions, query concern raised, and/or do what they say they will do, (within an appropriate timescale)
- Clear communication between the patient and health professional so the patient understood
- Short wait (acceptable for the patient) for an appointment.

Similarly, we also asked, ‘Was there anything about your consultation/appointment that could have been improved?’ Again, the most frequently occurring themes were identified into categories, with the most common responses, in order of majority:

- Access to a face-to-face appointment
- Short wait (acceptable to the patient) for an appointment
- Appointment booking /contact system
- Specific time scheduled for the appointment
- Responsive - the practice/staff member/health professional respond to questions, query concern raised, and/or do what they say they will do, (within an appropriate timescale).

The survey results identified some key themes around ‘good’ patient experiences. A GP system that is already facing high demand may benefit from additional resources, but there are steps that can be taken to improve the patient experience with existing availability and resource. Consideration should be given to communication, managing expectations, and responsiveness, as identified in our top five factors that make the most difference when things go right.

There were many positive responses to the survey, both in terms of what GP practices are doing well and the positive experiences of patients. Practices may wish to share and promote the findings to help challenge any negative perceptions, as well as serve to recognise the pressures on healthcare professionals and their continued hard work in the face of difficult circumstances.

Warm Spaces

Update to HWBB around work done, and key themes emerging from Warm Spaces. This work is live, with new themes developing/emerging - so the most up to date information will be shared at the meeting.

3. Ways of working/opportunities

Healthwatch and Health & Wellbeing Board, and relationships with HWBB partner organisations.



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