

## **HOSC Paper**

### **How Patient Experience of Primary Care Services is Monitored and used to Improve Services**

#### **1. Background**

Patient experience is increasingly recognised as a fundamental element of the quality of healthcare services. Primary care staff are often the closest NHS staff to patients and are well placed to understand their health needs and concerns. Overall public satisfaction with primary care services remains high compared to other parts of the NHS<sup>1</sup> but there is huge variation in terms of patient experience at an individual practice level. As people exercise greater choice and control in their own lives and become accustomed to high quality and responsive services in the commercial sector, the public have similar expectations of their primary care services and they will need to adapt accordingly.

#### **2. Purpose of the Paper**

The purpose of the paper is to provide summary information on the following areas in relation to primary care services in Brighton and Hove:

- the key mechanisms for obtaining & monitoring patient feedback
- the key issues that patients raise
- how patient feedback is used to improve services

#### **3. Background Information - Primary Care Services in Brighton and Hove**

- **175 GP's** (equating to 140 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE)) work in 49 practices in Brighton and Hove across **55 surgery buildings**
- **15% of the population see a GP in any two week period.** (Royal College of General Practitioners (2007)<sup>2</sup>
- **Each full time GP has on average 2,100 patients**
- **The average patient visits their GP practice about 5 times a year** with at least 78% of the population consulting their GP once a year or more<sup>3</sup>.
- **The highest users of Primary care services are older people aged 75+<sup>4</sup>**
- **Most health needs (86%) are managed in primary care<sup>5</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The 2008 Healthcare Commission survey found that 93% of people agreed that their GP always treated them with dignity and respect Healthcare Commission (2008) National survey of local health services 2008

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.gpcurriculum.co.uk/rcgp/12\\_facts.htm](http://www.gpcurriculum.co.uk/rcgp/12_facts.htm)

<sup>3</sup> The Information Centre (2008) Trends in Consultation Rates in General Practice 1995 to 2007

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#### **4. Sources of Information on Patient Experience**

There are a variety of means of measuring patient experience with primary care services:

##### **4.1 The GP Patient Survey**

This comprehensive national survey is run on a quarterly basis. It asks patients about a range of issues, such as how easy or difficult it is for patients to make an appointment at their surgery, satisfaction with opening hours and the quality of care received from their GP and practice nurses. It is sent to over 5 and a half million people each year across the country and provides patients with the chance to have their say about their GP practice<sup>6</sup>. The response rate to the survey between October 2009 and September 2010, was 37%.

##### **4.2 Practice's own surveys**

Practices sometimes find it helpful to design a simple survey to measure satisfaction with particular changes that have been made to services or to help inform what changes could be made. Examples of individual practice surveys include:

- Carers survey regarding the quality of end-of life care for palliative care patients.
- Patient travel surveys regarding potential re-location of GP surgery premises

##### **4.3 NHS Choices**

On the NHS Choices web-site<sup>7</sup> there is a tool to allow patients to leave feedback on GP services. Patients are asked a series of questions covering topics including how easy it was to get through on the phone, whether they could get an appointment and if they were treated with dignity and respect. There is also space to leave additional comments and GP practices can post responses to individual comments.

It provides GP practices with an opportunity to see patients' views on what they are doing well and what needs to be improved. However, there are limitations to the tool in that feedback is from a self-selecting population and older users who are the highest users of GP services may be less likely to post feedback using an on-line tool.

##### **4.4 Review of Complaints**

Reviewing key themes from patient complaints can be an important means of making improvements to services. The Quality and Outcomes Framework

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.gpcurriculum.co.uk/rcgp/12\\_facts.htm](http://www.gpcurriculum.co.uk/rcgp/12_facts.htm)

<sup>6</sup> A copy of the GP patients survey is available at the attached link: <http://www.gp-patient.co.uk/download/Questionnaires/Y5Q4%20GP%20Patient%20Survey%20questionnaire.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> The NHS web-site that provides information on health conditions and services

(QOF) specifically incentivises GP Practices to undertake an annual review of patient complaints.

## 5. What are the Key Themes from Patient Feedback

Different users of primary care services want different things and the challenge is for surgeries to be responsive to a range of different demands and design services effectively around the needs of the patients. A particular challenge for primary care is to delivery services that allow convenience and accessibility as well as continuity of care. Examples of different users of primary health care include:

- “Convenience” users want to see a doctor when and where they want. They tend to be younger more mobile people without long-term conditions so continuity of care is not of overriding importance.
- “Mainstream” users that make up the majority of users of primary care services. They access both the “sickness” as well as the preventative primary health care services. Often these users want to plan their lives in advance around caring and work commitments.
- “High-impact” users who need integrated and well managed care of long term conditions that improve quality of life and help avoid admission to hospital<sup>8</sup>.

Full details of the GP patient survey results are published on line.<sup>9</sup>

Key themes that have emerged from patient feedback for Brighton and Hove:

- **Overall satisfaction with care is high.** The latest GP survey results (July to September 2010) shows:
  - Overall satisfaction with GP services in Brighton and Hove at **88.1%**. (Slightly below the national average of **89.8%**)
  - 93% of patients in Brighton and Hove found receptionists helpful (in line with the national average of **93%**)
  - 94% have confidence and trust in their doctor
  - 81% would recommend their surgery to a friend.
- **Access to GP services still remains an issue.** Patient survey data for Brighton and Hove residents for the period July 2009 to June 2010 shows:

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<sup>8</sup> Categorisation devised by CBI (2007) Just What the Patient Ordered: Better GP Services

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.gp-patient.co.uk/results/>

- **22%** of patients do not find it easy to get through on the phone (in line with the national average of **22%**)
- **18% of patients who had tried to see a doctor fairly quickly in the last six months were not able to do so.** (This compares with a national figure of **20%**). The main reason for this was that there not any appointments available.
- **25% of patients who had tried to book ahead for an appointments in the last six months were not able to do so.** (this compares with the national average of **26%**).
- Results at an individual practice level in Brighton and Hove varies significantly - ranging from 63% who couldn't book an appointment to 2%). This shown in graphical form in Appendix A.
- **Services are not always available at times when patients want.**
  - **10%** of patients in Brighton on not satisfied with opening hours (compared with **7%** nationally). The most requested additional hours that patients want services available are on a Saturday
  - Satisfaction with opening hours varies at a practice level and this is shown graphically in Appendix B.

## 6. How is Patient Feedback Used to Improve Services

Improvements to services come about when primary care services respond to patient feedback. Increasingly as more information is put in to the public domain about the quality and performance of primary care services, patients can use this information to exercise their choice of GP. In reality patients are only exercising this choice in terms of changing GP practice to a limited extent, but the publication of information in itself is beginning to be a powerful lever for General Practice to improve the quality of their services.

### What are the PCT doing to support practices:

- The PCT has produced a **Balanced Scorecard** for every GP Practice in Brighton and Hove. It measures the quality and performance of GP Practice across 60 indicators including 12 indicators based on patient experience. A simplified version of the scorecard is being developed that will be put in the public domain in April 2011. An example scorecard is contained in Appendix C. The scorecard results vary by practice and a graph summarising scores by geographical area is contained in Appendix D.
- **Access and Responsiveness Local Enhanced Service.** In 2010-11 the PCT has made available pump priming funding to support GP practices to involve their patients in improving the access and responsiveness of their

services. Examples of work that has been undertaken by practices include:

- Developing additional means of obtaining patient feedback to inform the development of services specific to the individual practice population, for example the development of patient groups and practice surveys.
- Improvements to services that have been made include:
  - Installation of new phone systems to improve access to appointments.
  - Improvements to privacy arrangements within the surgery for example installing background music in the reception area so that conversations can not be overheard.
  - Improvements to surgery buildings such as re-design of reception area.

## **7. The Future**

Moving forward more information in the public domain in a format that is accessible and easily understood could help patients exercise choice. The PCT has encouraged practices to be more pro-active in terms of obtaining and using feedback from patients (e.g. through the Access and Responsiveness programme of work) but there is wide variation in approach at an individual practice level.

The 2010 White Paper: *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* proposes that from 2013 most commissioning of local health services will be undertaken by GP's. The thinking behind this new model is that GP's are closer to the patients and therefore services should develop in a more responsive way. Within Brighton and Hove GP's have organised themselves into three localities for the purpose of commissioning. It is expected that these locality groups will provide a forum for promoting quality improvement as well as reviewing and benchmarking practice performance. Given the variation in patient experience at a practice level these locality groups provide an opportunity for peer review and challenge as well as the sharing of good practice that could help improve the patient experience.

## Appendices

- Appendix A**      **Ability to Book Ahead for an Appointment – By Practice**
- Appendix B**      **Satisfaction with Opening Hours – By Practice**
- Appendix C**      **Example Scorecard**
- Appendix D**      **Scores by Practice and Locality**