

The Right Honourable Alan Johnston MP
Secretary of State for Health
The Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
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Date: 06 April 2009

Dear Mr Johnston

Members of Brighton & Hove Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) recently took the opportunity to discuss the 2009 Annual GP Survey.


In general, HOSC members welcomed the survey, and were encouraged that the Department of Health was conducting such a major piece of work aimed at gauging patients' experience of healthcare services.

However, some concerns about elements of the survey were voiced, and I have been asked to convey these concerns to you.

- Firstly, it was felt that an opportunity had been missed by limiting the scope of the survey to services provided *by* GP practices rather than all services available *at* GP practices. Thus, although services such as community midwifery are often accessed via the local GP surgery, they do not feature in the Annual GP Survey. HOSC members appreciate that it may make sense in terms of NHS financial and management structures to separate services provided by GP practices from services hosted by GP surgeries, but do not feel that this distinction is likely to be made by the average member of the public, for whom a GP service would most logically be any service accessed at a local GP surgery. A questionnaire which allowed respondents to comment on all services provided at their local GP practice would be more likely to involve and engage people than the current Annual GP Survey.
- Secondly, members thought that, whilst it was clearly important that the survey focused on GP practice opening times, there was a risk in considering this statistic in isolation. It would have been better to allow respondents to comment on GP practice opening times *and* the opening times of local prescribing pharmacies, as, without an accessible prescribing service, there was a limited value in having extended surgery openings.

- Thirdly, members considered that the survey was not designed to address adequately the issue of people who are registered with a GP practice which offers restricted appointment booking services and/or opening hours. Members who had experience of such a service did not feel that they could properly complete the survey and thought that future surveys should acknowledge that many patients were unable to access even standard GP services.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Mrs Denise Cobb
Chairman
Brighton & Hove Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

c.c.

Darren Grayson, Chief Executive, NHS Brighton & Hove,
Councillor Ken Norman, Brighton & Hove City Council Cabinet Member, Health and
Adult Social Care