

Hurley Clinic Patient Participation Group

Patients' Survey 2016

Analysis of responses and comments on survey

1. The overall response to the survey was much lower than in 2015, with just over 300 responses compared with 560 in 2015. The reasons for this fall are not clear, but it could partly be questionnaire fatigue. In addition, as in previous years members of the PPG steering committee did several sessions in the waiting area to help with completing the forms, but could not do as many as in previous years. That substantially reduced the number of completed paper forms. As before, text reminders were sent to encourage patients to respond on-line but that seems to have been less effective than previously. Around 100 (ie just under a third) of the responses were on paper forms picked up in the surgery, the rest completed on-line. There were enough responses to show patients' views clearly which is the main purpose of the exercise.
2. We used basically the same questionnaire as in 2015, with a few tweaks to avoid getting several answers to a single question and two extra questions about use of the new patient hubs. It should be easy and quick to complete, but there are still obvious problems for those with poor English, some of whom welcomed the help in the waiting area. The Survey Monkey software does the initial analysis of the results which is very useful.
3. The age range of the respondents was rather different from 2015, which was in turn different from 2014. 16% in 2016 were aged 65 and over (19% in 2015) and 80% were aged between 25 and 64 (75% in 2015). There were none aged under 18 but, as before, some comments suggest that the respondents were parents who may have been attending the surgery with their children. 49% were in full-time employment (44% in 2015) and 46% described themselves as 'White British', more than the 39% in 2015 but the figure still looks quite high, given the known demographics of the area. The language used in the comments suggests, as before, that English may not be the first language of a significant number of respondents.
4. There were 102 answers (about 30% of respondents) to Q18 'What other services would you like offered by the surgery?' and 110 comments in response to Q21 'Have you any other comments we should see that can help us to improve the service we offer you?' (52% of respondents compared with 52% in 2015). The answers to the two questions as usual overlapped considerably.
5. Most of the more detailed comments were made in the on-line responses and the two groups of comments have been separately analysed. As before, most of the comments were negative but there were around 20 positive ones with some individual clinicians being singled out for praise. As usual, there was a small number of complaints about clinical matters (around five) but as the questionnaires were completed anonymously, those complaints cannot be followed up. Similarly, there were a few comments which suggested that the patients concerned had had serious difficulties of access to the practice; they will be followed up by the practice staff where they raise significant points of concern.
6. Overall, the picture is that the improvements in the service that were first seen in 2014 are being maintained. A relatively high proportion of complaints is still about access, particularly long waits for appointments and lack of continuity of clinical staff. There was a total of 50 such complaints in the comments, or about 25% of all the comments. That is neither new nor unique to the Hurley Clinic. Many people have still not accepted that for non-urgent conditions they may have to wait for appointments, especially with a particular doctor, and do not like the telephone triage system. They also dislike the gatekeeper role of the reception staff and having to discuss with anyone other than a clinician why they need an urgent appointment.

7. It is worrying that the survey shows that patients still often see visiting A&E as the only solution if they cannot get an immediate appointment with a GP. More effort clearly needs to be given to informing patients about such other options as pharmacies, the urgent care centre at Guy's and the local access hubs that are supposed to provide an accessible alternative service, although the north Lambeth hubs are not very conveniently located for Hurley Clinic patients, a point made in the comments..
8. Several of the comments suggested that the practice should concentrate its resources on doing better what it already does (ie shorter waits for appointments, more convenient appointment times and more continuity of care, with fewer part-time and locum doctors) rather than increasing the range of services provided. On the other hand, there were a long wish-list of services some respondents wanted to be provided by the practice, ranging from mental health services through physiotherapy and sexual health services to various alternative therapies. In other words, they seek a one-stop shop that would cater for most, if not all, primary care needs. Some of the items on the wish-list eg chiropody are already available; some comments in answer to Q18 also suggest that some patients do not know what services are actually available at the practice.
9. There was a handful of comments from patients wanting more and better on-line access to the practice, including a better website, easier on-line appointments and prescription renewal, skype consultations with doctors and more information supplied to patients by text message or e-mail rather than paper letters. There is still a significant digital divide but it is clear that practices need to encourage patients to use the on-line services that are already available, as well as to develop such services more.
10. 88% of responses to Q2 about treatment by reception staff said that treatment was acceptable or better, which is very encouraging as the practice puts much effort into training those staff. The comments contained a significant number of complaints about treatment by the reception staff but some praise as well: one response thanked the reception staff for what they had to put up with every day from patients.
11. The answers to Q18 and Q21 both contain some specific points that the PPG will be following up with the practice. They include various aspects of the waiting area (the long-awaited replacement for the previous much-disliked tannoy system is not universally liked), including the need for a lower counter for wheelchair users and cleaner ladies' toilets.
12. This survey is the sixth to be done by the Hurley Clinic. It has, as usual, provided useful information about how patients see the practice and we would like to thank all those patients who completed the questionnaire. We would also like to thank Pam Elliott for setting it up and we hope we will be able to continue to do it in future. The practice uses the so-called 'Friends and Family' question on the NHS Choices website as well as providing forms in the waiting area but we find that the survey provides much more useful feedback.

Q1 In the past 12 months, how many times have you seen a doctor or nurse from the practice?

67% of 2016 respondents said they had seen a doctor or nurse three times or more, a higher figure than the 60% in 2015. Of those, 52% had seen a doctor or nurse 3 to 6 times and 15% had seen a doctor or nurse seven times or more, a reduction from 20% in 2015.

Q2 How do you rate the way you were treated by the receptionists?

12% of 2016 respondents said their treatment by the reception staff had been less than acceptable while 88% found it acceptable or better. 25% of the comments were complaints about treatment by reception staff but that was only 10% of the total responses. That suggests that satisfaction levels with treatment by the reception staff have not changed significantly since 2015.

Q3 What additional provision of appointments would you like?

28% of respondents were satisfied, a slight improvement on the 27% in 2015, 18% wanted more evening appointments and 35% wanted Saturday morning (the most popular suggested time) compared with 32% in 2015. As before, the comments showed that most of those who wanted weekend or evening appointments were working and found it difficult or impossible to take time off work, or did not want to.

The figures suggest that around 67%, a big increase on the 54% in 2015, of those who answered the question want more work-friendly appointment times, although only 44% of respondents were in full-time work. Some comments suggest that not all patients know about the early-morning and evening appointments that are available. The answers as always raise questions about employer attitudes to time taken off work for doctor/hospital appointments and that employers' attitudes are not always sympathetic towards those who need time off for medical appointments.

Q4 The practice is open 8 am until 6 pm 3 days a week and 7 am until 7.30 pm two days per week. How do you rate the hours the practice is open?

Only just under 8% of respondents (the same as in 2015) thought the opening hours were less than acceptable and 92% thought them acceptable or better (see also the answers to Q3 above) but three comments suggested more extended appointment times were needed, compared with one in 2015 from patients wanting longer or different opening hours better suited to the needs of those at work.

Q4 In the past 6 months, how easy have you found the following: getting through on the phone?

37% of respondents (36% in 2015) had found it difficult to get through and 39% (37% in 2015) replied 'as expected', which probably means that they had found it difficult but had not expected anything else. This suggests that there has been little significant change in the difficulties of getting through on the telephone, despite some bad patches. Among the comments, there were only six specific references to the time taken to get through on the telephone and a similarly small number of complaints about difficulties with getting repeat prescriptions. There were again several requests for easier on-line systems for making appointments and renewing prescriptions.

Q6 In the past 6 months, how easy have you found the following: speaking to a doctor on the phone?

24% had found it difficult (a slight increase from 22% in 2015) and 29% had found it as expected (30% in 2015). For 15% it had been better than expected (18% in 2015), 9% did not know and 22% had not wanted to. Unlike in previous years, there were no specific complaints about the triage arrangements or the difficulty of being available to be rung back by a doctor.

Q7 In the past 6 months, how easy have you found the following: getting test results on the phone?

30% of respondents had not wanted to get test results in that way and 18% did not know. 23% had found it 'as expected' and 22% 'difficult', an increase on the 16% in 2015.

Q8 In the past six months, how easy have you found the following: e-mailing the surgery?

47% of respondents had not wanted to e-mail the surgery, an increase from the 47% in 2015, and 8% had found it difficult, the same as in 2015. 25% said 'don't know' which suggests that they had not tried or not needed to. Many patients still seem unwilling to use e-mail for contacting the surgery but that may be because it is not a method of communication that the surgery seems to encourage, although some patients prefer it.

Q9 How quickly do you usually get to see a PARTICULAR doctor?

3% of respondents said they saw a particular doctor the same day, 1% the next working day (compared with 3% in 2015), 9% within a week (13% in 2015) and 25% within two weeks (17% in 2015), while 48% (32% in 2015) claimed to have to wait over two weeks and 21% didn't know. In 2014, 40% claimed to see a doctor of their choice within two weeks. The overall picture suggests that it has become more difficult to see a particular doctor although there have always been variations in the answers to that question.

Q10 How quickly do you usually get to see any doctor when it does not matter whom you see?

These figures show a less encouraging picture that probably reflects the practice's serious staffing difficulties during August 2015, shortly before the survey was done: nearly 10% (no change) saw a doctor on the same day and a further 8% on the next working day (7% in 2015), 26% within a week (30% in 2015) and 27% within two weeks (29% in 2015). 17% said they had to wait over 2 weeks compared with 17% in 2015 and 10% didn't know (compared with 14% in 2014). However, as with Q9 these figures rely a good deal on sometimes imperfect memories.

Q11 How quickly do you usually get to see a nurse when you need to?

36% (38% in 2015) did not know or did not need to see the nurse. 9% (12% in 2015) saw one on the day, 8% the next working day and 29% within a week (27% in 2015). Only 6% had to wait for more than two weeks (no change). 36% did not know.

Q12 If you need to see a doctor urgently, can you normally get seen within a day?

23% (26% in 2015) said yes, 36% said no (40% in 2015) and for 41% it had not happened. There is not much overall change since 2015 but, as in previous years, the comments about access contained several complaints about not being able to see a doctor when the need was urgent.

Q13 How late is your doctor or nurse to see you usually?

These answers are not easy to analyse as, again, they are not always consistent with some other replies. 12% said they waited less than 5 minutes, 39% less than 15 minutes, 33% less than 30 minutes and 16% more than 30 minutes. These figures are virtually all unchanged from 2015 and suggest that just over half the respondents waited less than 15 minutes. A few of the comments referred to the need for better punctuality but not enough to suggest that it is a common problem.

Q14 Do you have a regular doctor?

25% [35% in 2015] said yes, 53% [43% in 2015] said no but they would like one and 23% [22% in 2015] said no they hadn't really needed one. Significant numbers of the comments mentioned the lack of continuity of care and dislike of the practice's dependence on locums which implies that it is still a significant issue for some but others are less concerned about continuity of care.

Q15 If yes, how often do you see that regular doctor?

17% [17% in 2015] always saw that doctor, 8% [14% in 2015] saw that doctor a lot of the time, 39% [40% in 2015] sometimes and 36% [29% in 2015] almost never, so about 25% [31% in 2015] see their 'regular' doctor all or most of the time and there has been a drop since 2015.

Q16 Do you know about the scheme offered by Lambeth CCG where you can be given an appointment through the reception team to see a GP or Nurse at a neighbouring 'Hub' Surgery such as South Lambeth Road, or Clapham Family Practice?

The 'hubs' are new and this questions was designed to find out whether patients were aware of them or had used them. 45% answered yes, they knew about the hubs and 55% did not.

Q17 Have you had an appointment at one of the Lambeth CCG Additional Appointment Hubs (such as the practices at South Lambeth Road, and Clapham Family Practice)?
19% of respondents (ie 57 patients) said yes and 81% said no.
Q18 Are you happy with the range of services offered by the surgery?
There were 102 respondents (30% of the total) who suggested a range of services that they would like. As noted elsewhere, many (25% compared with 35% in 2015) wanted better access ie more appointments so shorter waits for an appointment, better telephone service and some wanted more continuity of care. There were 5 complaints about unpunctuality. The suggestions about other services sought were not new but there were fewer than in previous years (well man clinics, cancer advice, hearing aid battery replacements, and a dietician, particularly for diabetics, were not mentioned in 2015). There were altogether 17 complaints about the waiting area (some in answer to Q21)including 5 about the dirty state of the ladies' toilet.
Q19 How easy is it to enter the surgery?
20% [28% in 2015] found it acceptable and 77% [70% in 2015] easy. 3% found it difficult, [2% in 2015] and there were two comments about the need for better wheelchair access, including a more wheelchair-friendly reception counter.
Q20 How clean is the surgery?
94% [95% in 2015] found it as clean or cleaner than expected, 4% found it dirty [as in 2015]. There were several complaints about the ladies' toilets and familiar criticisms of the waiting area (gloomy and why was there no reading material).
Q21 Have you any other comments we should see that can help us to improve the service we offer you?
There were 110 [236 in 2015] responses to this question, very similar to the proportion of the total in 2015. As in previous years, a high proportion (around one-third) were specifically about access but fewer about the closely linked telephone service. There were 7 complaints about the new screens that have replaced the tannoy. The general tone of the complaints remains resigned rather than suggesting acute dissatisfaction but, as noted elsewhere, there were very few about standards of clinical care, although some anecdotes in the comments made it clear that a small number of patients were unhappy with aspects of their care.
Q20 How old are you?
81% [76% in 2015] of respondents were in the 25-64 age group ie they were of potentially working age (48% said they were in full-time employment). 3% were under 24 [5% in 2015] were under 24 and none under 18, while 15% [19% in 2015] were 65 and over. As before, this does not accurately reflect the heaviest users (the very young and the very old) but still explains the large number of requests for evening and Saturday morning appointments.
Q21 Are you: in full-time employment; part-time; unemployed; homekeeper; retired; student; or long term sick?
The proportion in full-time employment (48%) was higher than in 2015 (44%) but still explains the requests for evening and Saturday morning appointments. There were 14% in part-time work, 6% unemployed, 2% students and 10% long-term sick (6% in 2015). These figures need to be compared with the patient profile for the practice as it is likely that the full-time employed are over-represented among users.
Q22 Which ethnic group do you belong to?
46% [39% in 2015] were White British, 21% Black African and/or Black Caribbean or Black British, 13% White European or White Other and 11% 'other' or preferred not to say. Again, it would be interesting to compare these results with the ethnic profile for the area.