

Enter & View Report

Service	Portland Medical Centre
Address	184 Portland Road, London, SE25 4QB
Manager	Vicky Bernard
Date and time of visit	Wednesday 9th December 2015 at 10.30am
Status of visit	Announced
Healthwatch Croydon Enter & View team - Authorised Representatives	Annamika Koomoshan, Janet Benham
Lead Authorised Representative	Annamika Koomoshan
Healthwatch Croydon contact details	Healthwatch Croydon, 24 George Street, Croydon, CR0 1PB

Reason: Healthwatch Croydon trends analysis report showed a high number of people had problems with booking appointments.

Purpose of the visit: The Health and Social Care Act allows Healthwatch Croydon representatives to observe service delivery and to talk to service users, their families and relatives on premises such as hospitals, residential care homes, GP Practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. The visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service, but equally, they can take place when services have a good reputation. We can therefore learn from shared examples of what they are doing well from the perspective of the people who experience the service first hand.

On this occasion, 2 Authorised Representatives (including a Healthwatch staff member) carried out observations and engaged with patients, carers and staff. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations on areas for improvement if required. Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with the Healthwatch safeguarding policy. If at any time an Authorised Representative observes a potential safeguarding concern, they will inform their lead and service manager. The lead Authorised Representative will then end the visit. In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to Croydon Council's Safeguarding Team.

About the service

Portland Medical Centre has a list of 12,300 patients, with eight full time GPs covering a mixed area of Woodside and South Norwood. One GP is on long term sick. The medical centre implemented a telephone assessment service at the beginning of December to reduce waiting times for patients when booking an appointment. The new system involves reception staff taking patients' contact details for the GP to call back offering a telephone triage service. Each day a number of appointments are held for triage appointments.

Options:

- GP offers advice and reassurance
- Prescription
- Allocation of an appointment

Observations

In the reception area, patients logged in for their appointment via the IT system. Patients are called for their appointment via an automated display board. Staff were observed dealing with patients in a friendly and professional manner. Information was displayed about the Patient Participation Group, Complaints procedure and other health promotional material. Patients were able to use the hand sanitiser on arrival or exit.

Feedback from patients

	Topic	Response
1	Booking appointments	The aim was to obtain patients' experiences in booking appointments. The majority of patients had booked their appointment using the new telephone system. A few patients came into reception to arrange an appointment.
2	Telephone system	The aim was to obtain patients' experiences about the new telephone system. A parent commented "The GP triage service supports me as a parent to obtain advice or a prescription from the GP without having to take the children to the Medical Centre." The majority of patients commented that they prefer the new system, only a few individuals did not like it.
3	Allocation of appointments	The aim was to find out how long patients waited for an appointment. The majority of patients said they did not have to wait too long for an appointment. However, one patient commented "It took a long time to make an appointment and it's not suitable if you are working." Another patient who came into the Medical Centre to book an appointment waited 2 weeks for an appointment.
4	Waiting time	The aim was to find out how long patients waited for their appointments. The general consensus was that patients waited between 5-15 minutes to be seen. A few patients said they sometimes have to wait a long time to be seen.
5	Feedback on treatment	The aim was to find out whether patients were satisfied with their treatment. Positive feedback was received from all patients.
6	Staff interaction with patients	The aim was to gain feedback on patients' experiences with staff at the Practice. All patients commented that staff listen to them and conduct themselves in a friendly manner.
7	Complaints procedure	The aim was to establish how the Practice informs patients of the procedure and process for making a complaint. One patient commented that they had complained using the complaints procedure. The majority of patients were unaware of the complaints procedure that was displayed within the waiting area.

	Topic	Response
8	Feedback, comments and suggestions	The aim was to see whether patients were able to feed back their comments and suggestions. The majority of patients were unaware of how to feed back their comments or suggestions.
9	Patient Participation Group	The aim was to see whether the Practice had an active Patient Participation Group and how patients are involved. Most of the patients we spoke to were not aware of the Patient Participation Group or the purpose of the group.

Feedback from staff

	Topic	Response
1	Positive aspects of the role	The aim was to give staff an opportunity to feed back the positive aspects of their role. One member of staff commented "There is a lot of room to grow and progress." Another commented "The best thing about this surgery are the patients."
2	Challenges and difficulties	The aim was to establish if staff encounter any challenges within their job. Staff commented "Some patients can be challenging, especially those suffering with drug abuse and mental health related illnesses."
3	Improvements and suggestions	The aim was to find out if staff are able to make any suggestions. Staff commented "Management have an open door policy and are able to feed back their ideas. We also feedback ideas within team meetings, it's a friendly place to work." Another member of staff commented "Management forward staff questionnaires which are used within annual appraisals."
4	Training and development	The aim was to establish whether staff are offered training and development. Staff commented that they are encouraged to take up training and development opportunities. Some reception staff have undertaken further training to become health care assistants.
5	Support from management	The aim was to establish if staff are supported by their Manager. Staff commented that they feel supported by their Manager and are able to raise any issues or ideas.
6	Process in patients booking appointment	The aim was to obtain patients' experiences about the new telephone system. Following patients' complaints regarding booking appointments, the new telephone assessment service was set up to resolve this problem and also offer a telephone triage service. The aim of this method is to reduce the number of patients coming in for unnecessary appointments. As the waiting area cannot accommodate a large number of patients. We were told that the outcome of this has resulted in 40% to 50% less patients coming in for an appointment. Therefore putting less pressure on reception staff and freeing up GPs for more urgent appointments.
7	Complaints	The aim was to establish how the Practice deals with complaints. A member of staff commented "Patients are advised to put formal complaints in writing to the Practice Manager. Or to feedback comments or suggestions via the friends and family system."
8	Patient Participation Group	The aim was to find out how patients are involved in the Patient Participation Group. Staff were aware of the Patients Participation Group and that regular meetings are held. They are keen to get a diverse range of patients involved to represent the community.

Feedback from management

	Question	Response
1	Positive areas	The aim was to establish what staff thought was working well for the Practice. Management commented “We are very lucky to have a stable workforce. With an excellent team of GPs and 5 brilliant practise nurses that manage patients with chronic diseases. The GPs are supported by good admin staff. This is supported by good leadership amongst the GP partners. Portland has floating doctors and nurses who are able to deal with urgent issues or for peer to peer support. Portland Medical Centre is a training practice, Registrars are undertaking development to become independent GPs.
2	Changes and improvements	The aim was to give staff and management an opportunity to elaborate on any changes or improvements. Management commented the new telephone triage system was implemented in December. This resulted in a reduction in the number of patients coming in for an appointment.
3	Challenges and difficulties	The aim was to establish the main challenges and difficulties the Practice encounters. Management stated the main challenge is dealing with the large number of patients calling at 8am. Other challenges are achieving the target set in supporting patients in managing their long term conditions and in contacting the hard-to-reach patients.
4	Suggestions on future improvement	The aim was to give staff and management an opportunity to share their ideas. Due to the number of complaints regarding the old booking system, a new telephone triage system was recently implemented.
5	Feedback and suggestions from staff	The aim was to identify how staff feedback their ideas. Staff are encouraged to share their ideas with the partners.
6	Training and development	The aim was to establish what training and development opportunities are offered to staff. Management explained all staff are offered training and development. Plus; staff are encouraged in career development, a receptionist has trained to become a health care assistant. Other members of staff are extending their learning to manage specific areas.
7	Staffing levels	The aim was to find out if staffing levels are adequate. The manager commented that staffing levels are at full complement.
8	Complaints/ compliments	The aim was to establish how the Practice deals with compliments and complaints. Management explained that it is very rare for patients to complain about clinical care. Staff do received compliments directly from patients. A few patients have complained about the new telephone system. At reception there is a complaints and compliments box for patients to feed back their comments. Patients are encouraged to contact the practise manager in writing for formal complaints.
9	Patient Participation Group	The aim was to find out how patients are involved in the Patient Participation Group. The Practice has an active Patient Participation Group, but are struggling to engage with patients from a diverse background to truly represent the community of South Norwood and Woodside. In addition there is a virtual Patients Participation Group who are contacted via email.

Conclusion

The implementation of the new telephone assessment system has improved patient's access to appointments. Overall, positive feedback was received from patients regarding the appointment booking system and interaction from staff. Internally, the overall impression is that Portland Medical Centre is performing well and has good leadership which invests in staff training and development. The new telephone system has reduced the number of patients coming in for an appointment.

Positives

- Practice nurses who visit housebound patients in supporting those individuals with chronic conditions.
- Skilled specialist nurses.
- Good leadership provided by Management.
- Staff are encouraged to undertake training and development.
- Staff offered career development.
- Good team spirit between staff.
- Peer to peer support group set up to empower patients to manage their chronic conditions with the support from a GP and nurse.
- Patients did not wait long for their appointment.
- All patients commented that staff are friendly.
- Patients fed back that they were happy with the treatment received.
- Patients commented that it was relatively easy to call through for an appointment.
- Reactive to patient's needs.

Recommendations

- Patients were not aware of the Patient Participation Group.
- The GP Practice is struggling with recruiting a more diverse range of patients for their Patient Participation Group. Suggested ways of promoting the group could be via a poster displayed within Reception with details of the meetings dates. Information could also be included within the newsletter website and via text message to encourage a more diverse group.

Acknowledgements: Healthwatch Croydon would like to thank Tracey Miller and Portland Medical Centre staff, patients and carers for their co-operation during the visit.

Disclaimer

This report is a representative sample of the views of the outpatients, carers and staff that Healthwatch Croydon spoke to within this timeframe and does not represent the views of all the patients, carers and staff at Portland Medical Centre. The observations made in this report only relate to the visit carried out at Portland Medical Centre on Wednesday 9th December 2015 at 10:30am.

Brigstock and South Norwood Partnership confirmed they were satisfied with the report and have actioned the recommendations that were highlighted.