

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL
25 JULY 2012
WAITING TIMES FOR GP APPOINTMENTS
REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The report provides information in respect of waiting times for GP appointments, the key outcomes of the most recent national GP Patient Survey and the development of the Patient Participation Directed Enhanced Service concept. The report will be introduced by Jon Holliday, Assistant Director of Primary Care Contracting at NHS Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

2. Action required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the information in the report.

3. Background information

- 3.1 At its meeting on 23 May 2012 – minute 8 refers – the Panel requested information in respect of waiting times for GP appointments, the perception among Panel members being that it was becoming increasingly difficult to secure timely GP appointments across Nottingham. This perception was shared by several representatives at the City Council's Community Equality Forum at its May 2012 meeting.
- 3.2 The information provided by NHS Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County at Appendix 1 to this report addresses both the issue of waiting times and wider issues captured by the most GP Patient Survey. However, changes to the questionnaire design and weighting methodology mean that directly comparing the most recent Survey outcomes with those of previous years is not possible.
- 3.3 Appendix 1 also provides information in respect of Patient Participation Directed Enhanced Service (DES) initiative, which seeks to engage practice patients about the range and quality of services at practice level.

4. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING EXEMPT OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

None.

5. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

- 5.1 Minutes of May 2012 Health Scrutiny Panel meeting.

6. Contact information

Contact Colleague

Noel McMenamin
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator
noel.mcmenamin@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
0115 8764304

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Waiting times for GP appointments

The recently published GP Patient Survey results for 2011/12 indicate, for NHS Nottingham City, an overall satisfaction rate of 89% in respect of ability to get an appointment to see or speak with someone – compared to national satisfaction rate of 90%. Full results available from:

http://www.gp-patient.co.uk/results/download/_y6q2/Y6W2_PCT_unweighted.xls

The Information Centre advise that due to changes to the GP Patient Survey questionnaire design and survey frequency, as well as the change to the weighting methodology, 2011-12 results cannot be compared to previous years, even where questions remain the same. It would appear that the questions around ability to access a GP appointment have changed in 2011/12 with the focus now on ability to get an appointment to see or speak to someone (rather than to see a GP fairly quickly as in previous years), so it is not possible to compare like for like. This will need to be taken into account when considering the figures below:

GP Patient Survey Results

	Survey Question: Able to see a doctor fairly quickly					Survey Question: Able to get an appointment to see or speak to someone
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Results for England as a whole	86%	87%	84%	80%	79%	90%
NOTTINGHAM CITY PCT	85%	86%	83%	80%	79%	89%

	Survey question: Frequency of seeing preferred GP					Survey Question: Frequency of seeing preferred GP
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Results for England as a whole	88%	88%	77%	75%	73%	71%
NOTTINGHAM CITY PCT	86%	86%	76%	76%	75%	70%

The above figures do indicate a gradual drop in patient satisfaction nationally as well as locally in respect of being able to see a GP quickly and the frequency of being able to see preferred GP from 2007 – 2011. The 2011/12 result of 89% in respect of being able to see or speak with someone would suggest an improvement of patient satisfaction, however this figure includes patient access to see GP or nurse and to speak with GP or nurse, therefore we do not have a clear picture from this national survey as to the current satisfaction with just access to GPs. The 2012 result in respect of patient satisfaction in the frequency of seeing preferred GP appears to have dropped again locally, but it is noted that this is matching a national trend.

The Department of Health 48 hour access target was withdrawn some years ago and PCTs are no longer required to monitor practices around the availability of GP appointments. For this reason we do not have local data on practice performance around access and no indication about actual patient experience apart from occasional anecdotal references or from the occasional complaints to the PCT.

PCT Complaints statistics indicate that 12% of complaints received by the PCT during 2012 to date have been around patients' inability to get GP appointments. The percentage in previous years is as follows: 2009/10 – 10%; 2010/11 – 14%; 2011/12 – 11%.

As of April 2012 NHS Nottingham City has 41 out of 60 GMS/PMS practices signed up to provide additional appointments outside of core contract hours (8.00am – 6.30pm Monday to Friday). In addition three APMS practices provide extended access appointments as a requirement of their core contract and the APMS 8am-8pm GP led Health Centre provides access to a GP during extended hours as core.

Most practices offer a mixture of pre-bookable and book on the day appointments. Guidance is available to all practices on improving access which includes methods for ensuring that the appropriate numbers of appointments are being provided each week relative to the number of registered patients as well as guidance on the spread of appointments across the week and the balance between pre bookable and book on the day appointments. GP practices are responsible for ensuring that they have calculated the correct capacity (number of GPs/number of appointments) relative to their demand and for undertaking regular demand/capacity reviews.

Patient Participation Directed Enhanced Service (DES)

In April 2011 a Patient Participation DES was introduced with 46 practices signing up and 36 practices participated in the first year – a further 2 practices have applied to sign up from April 2012. The purpose of the DES is to ensure that patients are involved in decisions about the range and quality of services provided and , over time, commissioned by their practice.

Department of Health guidance states that the DES aims to promote the proactive engagement of patients through the use of effective Patient Reference Groups (PRGs) and to seek views from practice patients through the use of a local practice survey. The outcomes of the engagement and the views of patients are to be published on the practice website. One aspect that practices may wish to focus on is excellent access into the practice, and also from the practice to other services in its role of coordinator of care, facilitating access to other health and social care providers. Access must be flexible enough to meet the varying needs of individuals and requires sufficient capacity to meet the population's needs. Details of access arrangements (including opening hours) should be made widely available to the population to enable patients to exercise choice.