

Dr Bhate & Partners

How are things going since the merger?

Patient feedback

October 2018



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1. Executive Summary

The Healthwatch Sunderland Engagement Team and volunteers observed that the majority of patients at the newly formed Dr Bhate and Partners were happy with the services they receive at the practice. Our findings show that quality overall has been largely maintained since the merger for both sets of patients, and in some cases services were found to have improved e.g. ordering prescriptions and the quality of the GP appointment.

Both positive and negative feedback was received from patients, with four main themes being highlighted. These themes are; appointments, general service delivery, prescriptions and doctors.

During the visits to the practice it became apparent that Dr Nathan's ex-patients missed the fact that he hosted a drop-in surgery twice a week. These patients reported that they had experienced no or very short waiting times to get an appointment with Dr Nathan. During Healthwatch Sunderland engagement with GP practice patients across the city we have found this type of patient experience not to be the norm, with the majority of patients on average waiting two weeks to see a GP.



2. Introduction

Who is Healthwatch Sunderland?

Healthwatch Sunderland is the independent local champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to make sure that those running services put people at the heart of care.

By speaking to Sunderland residents we aim to understand their needs, experiences and concerns of accessing and using local health and social care services. We can then speak out on their behalf to local service providers, focusing on people's concerns about current services and ensuring they are listened to and addressed by those who are running services.

We encourage and work with local services to involve Sunderland residents in the changes to health and social care provision. The ultimate aim is to get things right for the future, with health and social care services which meet the needs of the local community.



*We champion what matters to you and
work with others
to find ideas that work.*

*We are independent and committed to
making the
biggest difference to you.*



3. Background

In November 2017, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group, wrote to all patients of Dr Nathan's GP surgery and Dr Bhate & Dr Hussein's GP surgery, to advise that following Dr Nathan's retirement in March 2018, the two surgeries would be merging.

Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group told patients the bigger practice would be better for patients, and made the following commitments to patients of both surgeries:

- Patients in both practices could see the same doctors, nurses, and receptionists
- Patients would have a greater choice of doctors and nurses as they could both see staff from the merged surgery
- Opening times would remain the same
- Clinics and support services would remain the same
- Patients would receive the same level of support that they had in the past

Patients were given the opportunity to share their views on the proposed merger via two face to face sessions at the surgery, and via a written survey available online. They were offered the support of Healthwatch Sunderland as the independent health and social care consumer champion.

Patients were also given the choice to remain as a registered patient in the merged surgery, or choose to register with another local surgery if they lived within that surgery boundary.

From Monday 2nd April 2018 the surgeries, based at Riverview Health Centre, became known as Dr Bhate and Partners.

Six months after the merger, Healthwatch Sunderland wanted to find out how things were going from a patients perspective, and this report details feedback we received from patients during 4 separate visits to the practice.

4. Methodology

The Healthwatch engagement team and volunteers visited the surgery on four separate occasions to speak to patients using a questionnaire specifically designed to find out how the service was working post-merger.

The visits were held at the following times:

Wednesday 3rd October from 9am - 11am

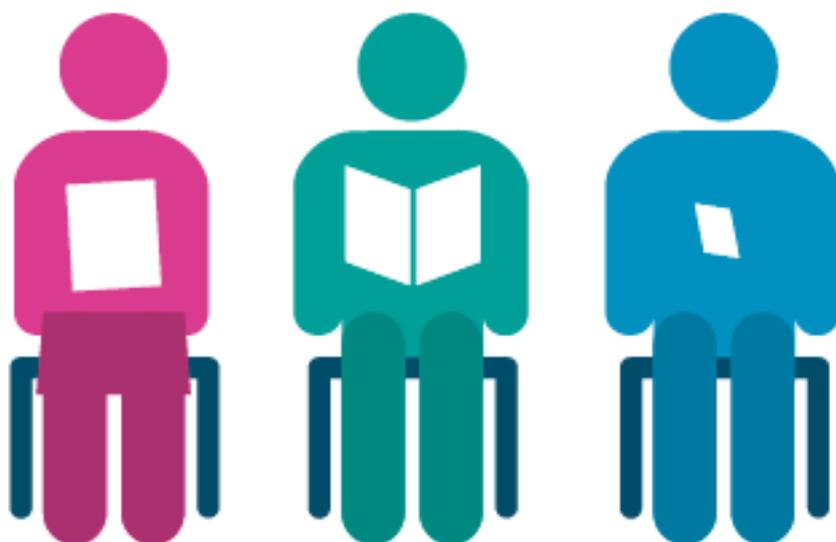
Friday 5th October from 4pm - 4.30pm

Monday 8th October from 3pm - 5pm

Thursday 11th October from 9am - 11am

The survey we used can be found on page 17.

RECEPTION



5. Feedback

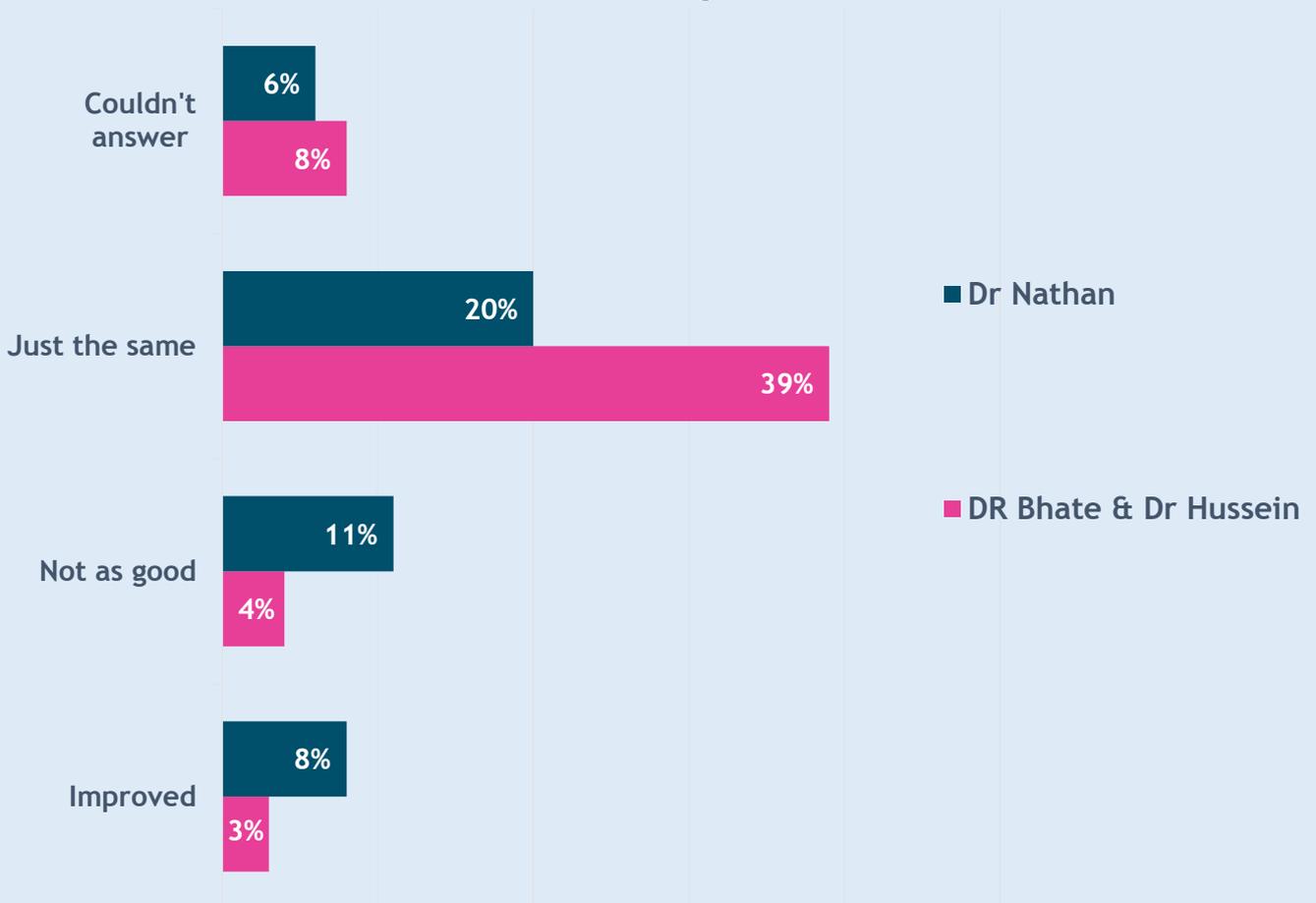
During the Healthwatch Sunderland visits to the practice we spoke to 71 patients from the newly formed Dr Bhate & Partners.

Patient breakdown

55% of patients were originally registered with Dr Bhate & Dr Hussein

45% of patients were originally registered with Dr Nathan

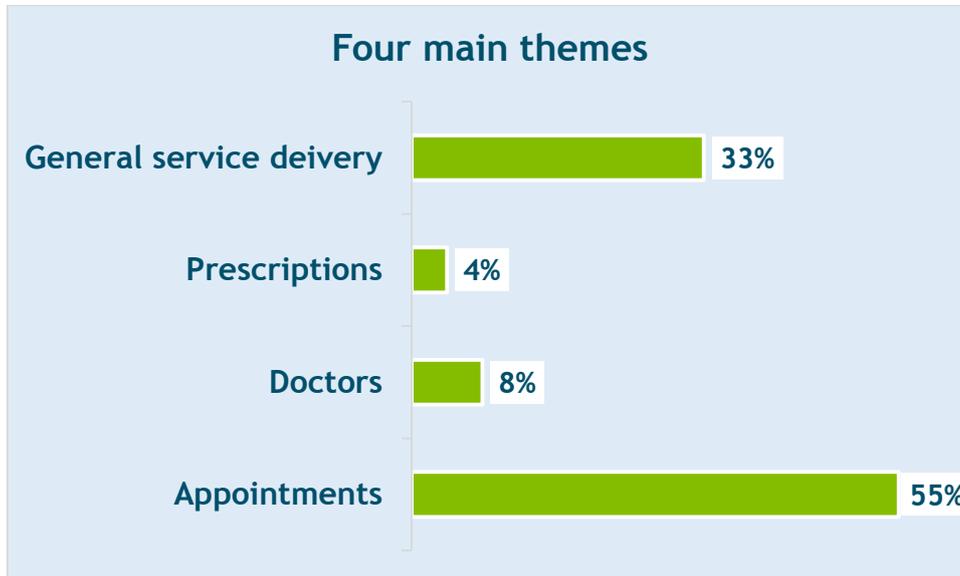
We asked the patients if they had noticed any changes since the merger



Positive feedback received

From the 63 positive pieces of feedback we received from patients during our visits, we were able to group the responses into 4 main themes.

These were general service delivery, prescriptions doctors and appointments.



General service delivery

The feedback we received on general service delivery is given below:

Receptionists

- Receptionist are good
- Receptionists are great
- The staff at reception are nice
- The staff here are very good
- I like the staff here
- The staff here are helpful

Telephone system

- Phone was answered quickly
- They are pretty quick to answer the phone

“The staff here are great and the place is nice and clean”

Prescriptions

The feedback we received about prescriptions is below:

- I suffer from anxiety and get my prescriptions easily
- I still get prescriptions the way I used to before. Everything is fine
- I can get prescriptions OK - In the main it is working well
- No problems getting prescriptions
- I still get my prescriptions OK
- The prescription system is better than Dr Nathan's. You can do it over the phone
- My repeat prescriptions are fine
- I can still get my prescriptions just the same
- Requesting prescriptions is easier here as you can do it over the phone, but I would welcome the prescription line being open all day. When I return to work I will be unable to use it as we are not allowed to make telephone calls

"You can order your prescriptions over the phone, which is great. Everything else is just the same"

"Prescriptions are fine and sent straight to the pharmacy. No problems there - Everything is fine!"

Doctors

The feedback we received about the doctors at the surgery is given below:

- I feel there is continuity with seeing my GP
- Very good service from Dr Bhate - I usually see him - he's my mate.
- I have been at this surgery all my life - is a good GP
- The GPs are good when you get to see them
- My new doctor is excellent
- Last time I saw Dr Bhate, who was very efficient

"It's the same receptionist from Dr Nathan's surgery and she knows me well"

"I can't fault Dr Bruce and the nurses"



Appointments

The feedback we received on appointments is given below:

- I can now make an appointment 2 weeks ahead
- Get to see a GP usually within 2-3 days
- Getting an appointment is easy enough - it's the same. I rang up today and got an emergency appointment. I am happy to see different GPs
- It's easy to make an appointment. I had a fever and was really poorly and got an appointment same day
- It's my first visit since the merger, but I got my appointment OK
- I still get appointments the way I used to before
- I called this morning and got straight in on a cancellation
- It's pretty quick to get an appointment, I got an emergency one for today
- I can get appointments OK - In the main it is working well
- It has got a little busier, but I get my appointments for regular check-ups OK
- Got an appointment OK today. I think it is a lot better now for appointments
- Early days to comment, but I get appointments OK
- 3 patients said "I get my appointments OK"
- I can get appointments OK - No real difference
- I can get appointment OK with the Nurse Practitioner. She came from Dr Nathan's Surgery
- Getting an appointment is just the same
- I like the new system of text reminders for appointments, which I didn't get at Dr Nathan's practice

"I have had a couple of appointments the same day. I just explained the appointments were for my daughter and got straight in"

"It is easier here to get an appointment and there are more GPs to choose from"

"You can get an appointment quickly - It's a good overall service"

General feedback

- Nothing has changed, it's normal service
- The service was good before and it still is good now
- I haven't noticed any changes - It's always been a good service
- Everything is just the same
- Everything is the same, I try not to come much!
- I am happy with the service overall
- I am happy
- I've only been once since the merger and everything is OK
- I have no problems with the service
- The systems have improved
- Everything seems just the same
- I can't see any differences since the merger

"I don't use the surgery much. It's my first visit since the merger and I haven't noticed any change"

Further positive comments

We asked patients if they would like to give us any further feedback about Dr Bhate & Partners practice. Here are the positive comments we received:

- I get well treated, so I don't have to come very often. I had Cellulitis of the leg and went upstairs to see the nurse. I had to wait so went to the drop in centre and returned here for regular dressings and received a good service
- I am happy with the service
- I am happy with the service I receive here
- I am generally happy - the staff are excellent
- Everything is fine
- I've been at the surgery for 64 years and I have always found them to be good
- They're OK here. I will have to get used to them. I was with Dr Nathan for 26 years
- This is a really good surgery and the staff are really helpful
- The staff here are really friendly and the GPs are good

“They are amazing here. I have no complaints or problems!”

“I feel I get a good service - been here since 1941 and I am happy. I'm here today for a flu injection”

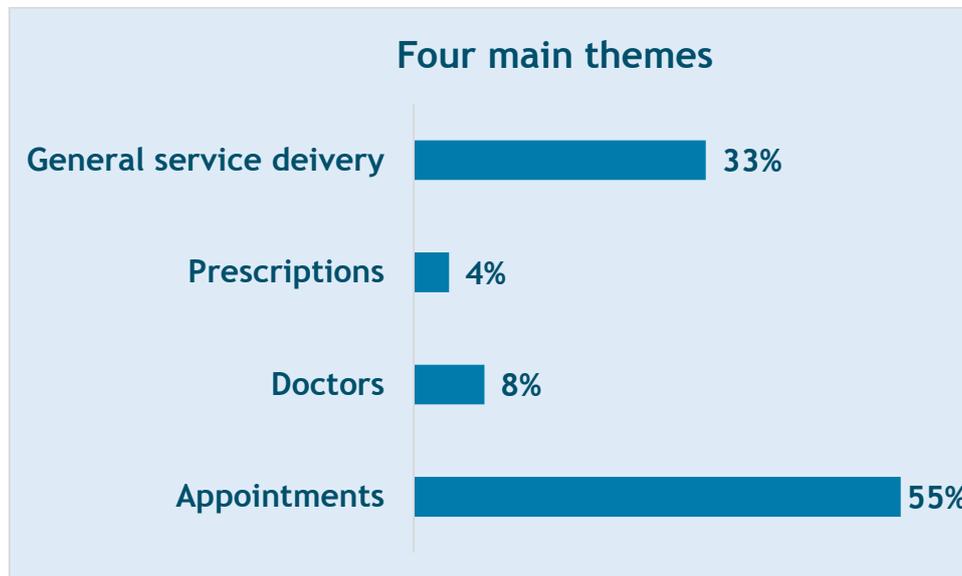
“The staff here are really friendly and the GPs are good”



Negative Feedback received

From the 24 negative pieces of feedback we received from patients during our visits, we were able to group the responses into 4 main themes.

These were general service delivery, prescriptions doctors and appointments.



General service delivery

The feedback we received on general service delivery is given below:

Reception

- I have called on several occasions to speak to the GP and the receptionist has been rude. This has put me off and I haven't called again
- I feel the receptionists haven't got time for you

Telephone system

- The phone service is not there yet
- I was on hold for 25 minutes

General feedback

- I was with Dr Nathan - my records were lost at first and I had to tell my story over to a stranger. I'm not sure if they have my records for this appointment
- There are no mental health leaflets or information in the surgery waiting room
- It seems a lot busier now

Prescriptions

The feedback we received about prescriptions is below:

- There has been some confusion over my prescriptions

Doctors

The feedback we received about the doctors at the surgery is given below:

- The doctors aren't as good as Dr Nathan. It's like they haven't got time for you
- The GP has treated me like I am a child

Appointments

The feedback we received on appointments is given below:

- Had to call mental health services for them to get me an appointment
- It's difficult to get an appointment here. I usually have to see the Nurse Practitioner. I've only seen Dr Bhate once, briefly and I don't know who the other Doctors are
- Two patients said "I wait longer here for an appointment"
- You wait over a week here for an appointment
- Wait ages for an appointment. Used to get in straight away but now it's a couple of weeks. Dr Nathan used to do walk-in clinics on a Tues and Thurs
- Before the merger I got to see a GP quicker. I rang yesterday and couldn't get an appointment until next week, but called back this morning and got an emergency appointment
- Usually wait about a week to see Dr Bhate now
- It's a struggle to get an appointment now. I waited 3 weeks and needed to explain my issues to the receptionist before she gave me an appointment
- You used to be able to drop in to see Dr Nathan but you can't do that here. It's about a 2 week wait for an appointment.
- It used to be a couple of days, now it's a week or so. Everything else is fine

"You can't wait from 3pm to see a doctor anymore. If you miss an appointment you could wait 3 weeks for another one"

"The waiting time for an appointment is longer and the waiting time in the waiting room is also longer"

"It's harder to get an appointment than it was with Dr Nathan"

We asked patients if they would like to give us any further feedback about Dr Bhate & Partners practice. Here is the negative comment we received:

- My health visitor had to call the surgery as I didn't get my 6 week check after having my baby. It didn't get done until the baby was 9 weeks old. I thought about changing practice but I am going to see how it goes

Neutral Feedback received:

We received 6 pieces of neutral from patients during our visits, these were around appointments and prescriptions.

Appointments

- It was a 2 week wait and this might have been sooner with Dr Nathan, but it's wasn't an issue on this occasion
- There is about 1 week wait for appointments
- It's more difficult to get an appointment than it was at Dr Nathan's. I've waited over a week for this one. But I didn't need an urgent one
- Waited a little over a week for my appointment, but didn't ask for an emergency appointment
- Dr Bhate is now part-time, so it's obvious that it's more difficult to get an appointment

Prescriptions

- I had a few issues with prescriptions at first, but this was rectified



6. Additional findings and signposting

During The Healthwatch Sunderland engagement sessions we spoke to 2 patients who were new to the practice since the merger. Here is their feedback:

“I've been a patient here for 3 months. I get appointments OK and my prescriptions have been champion.”

“They are flexible with appointments. I needed an urgent appointment and the system worked well.”

The team also spoke to patients who had stated they find it difficult to get a GP appointment when they need one. To support them Healthwatch Sunderland felt it was important to inform and signpost these 9 patients to the GP Extended Access Service. Across all four visits to the practice, Healthwatch staff and volunteers noted that although there were two posters (one situated on the main, front facing wall of the waiting area) promoting the GP Extended Access Services, some patients were still unaware of the availability of this new service. With one patient even commenting that while she waits for her appointments she automatically looks at her phone and doesn't notice what is displayed around her. Another patient commented that he was aware that his son had used the service at the Riverview Health Centre and found it very useful as it fit in with his work schedule.

Through our general engagement work, we have found that the poster advertising the GP Extended Access service is poorly received by patients, who find the poster to be something they don't notice and when trying to read it find the text to be too small.

In addition two patients were encouraged by the Healthwatch team to ask at reception about the Patient Electronic Access. One of these patients had stated he found he waited too long for an appointment if he had missed a scheduled appointment.

Three patients were also signposted by the Healthwatch team to the following services: Age UK for benefits advice, Sunderland Care and Support Community Equipment Services, local Mind organisations and the National Mind website for mental health information and support.

Dr S.M.Bhate & Partners

How are things going since the merger?

Which surgery were you registered with prior to the merger?

Dr Bhate and Dr Hussien

Dr Nathan's Surgery

Have you noticed any changes in the service you are now receiving at the GP practice?

The services have improved

The services is not as good as it was

I haven't noticed any changes

Please explain your answer

PTO if necessary

Is there anything else you would like to say about the service you receive at the practice?

PTO if necessary

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