

New Washington Medical Group

How are things going since the merger?

6 months on

Patient feedback

November 2018



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New Washington Medical Group

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1. Executive Summary

The Healthwatch Sunderland engagement team spoke to 99 patients during the four visits made to the practice, 34 patients originally from Dr Thomas, 31 patients originally from Dr Bhatt and Dr Benn, 28 patients originally from Victoria Medical Practice, 2 patients were unsure and 3 were new patients. General feedback highlighted that patients had differing experiences of the newly formed practice, dependent upon who their original practice was.

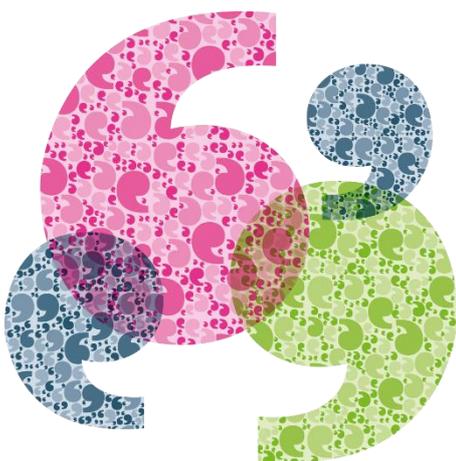
Dr Thomas's original patients fed the following back; 9% felt things had improved, 47% felt things were not as good and 48% had noticed no changes.

Dr Bhatt and Dr Benn's original patients fed the following back; 10% felt things had improved, 81% felt things were not as good, 3% felt things hadn't changed and 6% couldn't answer.

Victoria Medical Practice's original patients fed the following back; 14% felt things had improved, 43% felt things were not as good and 43% had noticed no changes.

Patients gave positive comments about the practice since the merger, which were grouped under four main themes; 35% complimented practice staff, 30% complimented service delivery, 30% spoke positively about their access to appointments and 4% informed us that the prescription process was good.

The negative feedback given by patients was grouped into seven main themes; 37% of patients gave negative comments regarding the telephone system, 27% gave negative comments regarding waiting time for appointments to see their GP, 13% gave negative feedback about confusion over the two reception/waiting areas, 8% gave negative feedback regarding practice staff, 5% gave negative feedback regarding service delivery, 5% gave negative feedback on continuity to see the same GP and 5% stated that they have had issues when ordering prescriptions and 9% gave negative feedback about the staff at the surgery.



2. Introduction

What 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 Victoria Medical Practice, Dr Thomas and Dr Bhatt & Dr Benn (7000 patients in total) to inform them of the potential merger of the three practices.

Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group advised patients of the reasons behind the potential merger and what the merger would mean to them:

“The practices are constantly looking to improve patient services and want to make sure they continue at a high standard into the future. By bringing together the three practices we will build a bigger, better and stronger partnership with more clinical and support staff available to patients. It will help our staff develop by sharing knowledge and skills as well as freeing up time for both the medical and administrative team to access further training and development activities which will ultimately benefit our patients. It will also help financially as we will be able to share budgets and costs - again, this will help us be more able to manage long term and provide patients with a better service into the future.”

Once the decision to merge the practices was made, patients were informed that they would see no change in services as a result.

- Patients will be able to see the same doctors and nurses they do now, and have access to others if they don't have a preferred GP or nurse. There is also more likelihood of an earlier appointment as the practice team will effectively grow
- Opening times will remain the same
- All clinics and support services available to all three practices will remain the same

In November 2018, Healthwatch Sunderland gathered feedback from 99 patients from the newly formed New Washington Medical Group to provide the practice with focussed feedback on how patients felt about the new practice and how it was working for them. This report details the feedback from those patients who engaged with the survey during four separate visits to the practice.

4. Methodology

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

The visits were held at the following times:

Monday 5th November 2018 from 9am - 11am

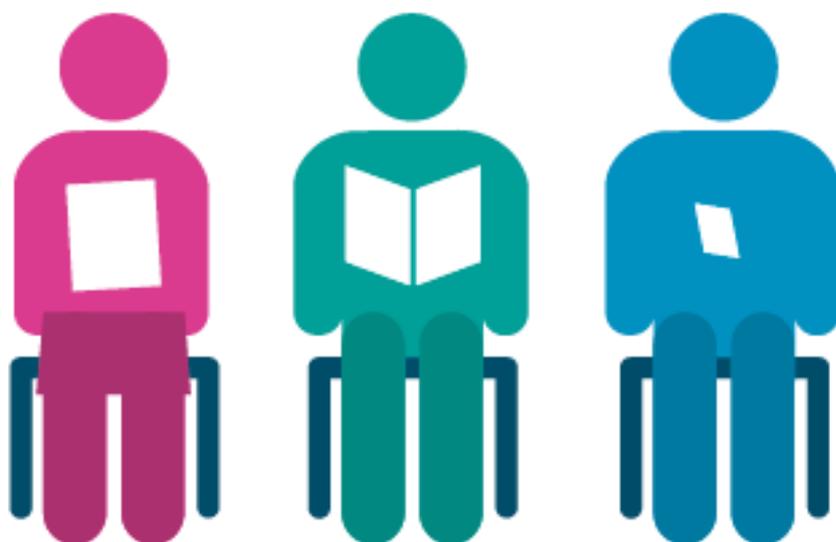
Thursday 15th November 2018 from 3pm - 5pm

Monday 19th November 2018 from 9am - 11am

Tuesday 20th November 2018 from 3.30pm - 5.30pm

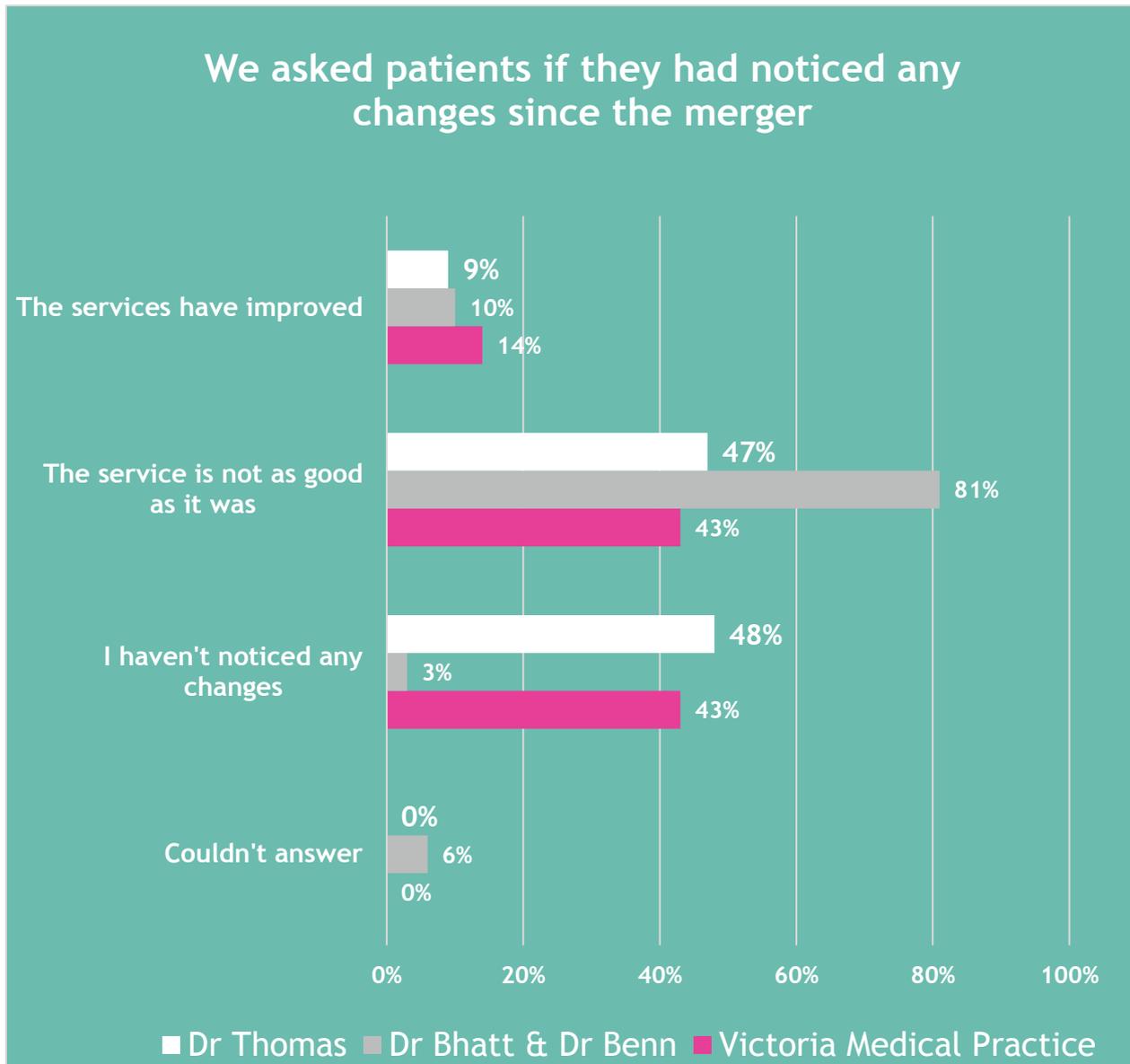
The survey we used can be found on page 19.

RECEPTION



5. Feedback

During the Healthwatch Sunderland visits to the practice we spoke to 99 patients from the practice.

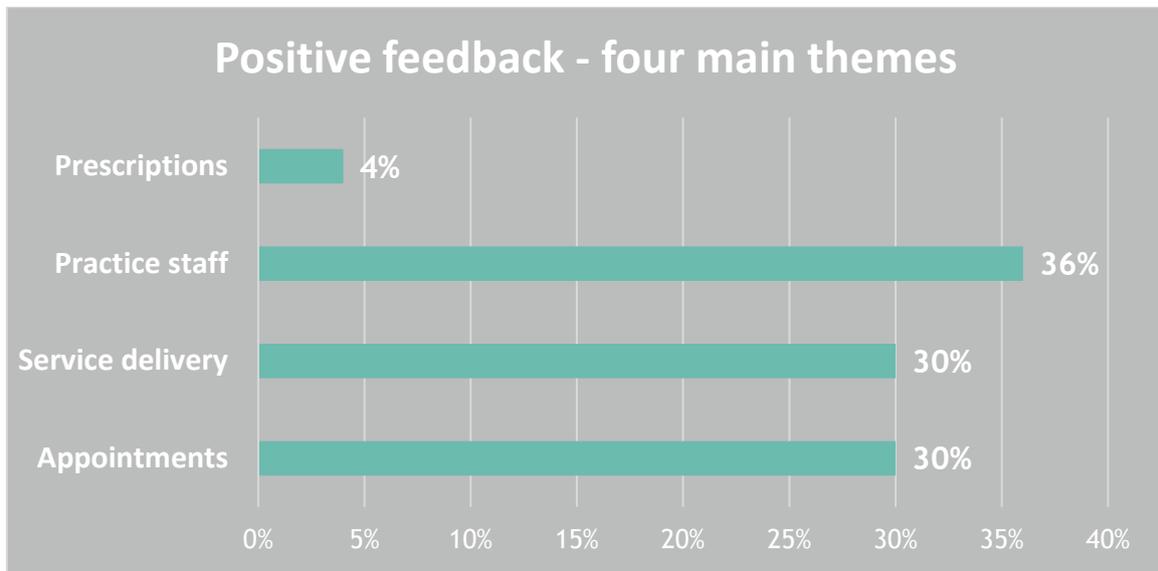


We went on to ask patients to explain their response and they gave us the following feedback.

Positive feedback received

Patients gave us examples of 44 pieces of positive feedback during our visits, we were able to group their responses into 4 main themes.

These were: prescriptions, practice staff, service delivery and appointments.



Prescriptions

The positive feedback we received about prescriptions is given below:

- Script ordering is good
- Prescriptions are working well

Practice staff

The positive feedback we received about practice staff is given below:

- Reception staff have improved, can ring anytime for appointments
- On the plus side I've been introduced to new GPs and building relationships with them
- Good service - if they say they will ring you back they will do, they are reliable
- Dr Madathil is really good
- Dr Reay is very good
- Reception staff are all good
- Dr Thomas is good (X2)
- Dr Bhatt is smashing, staff and doctors are good

“Staff are friendlier, more options, better organised”

“I get well looked after by the doctors”

“Much better now doctors are now listening and I am very pleased”

- Staff are very friendly
- Dr Madathil very good with me
- Still the same - staff really helpful

“Very pleasant people - efficient and very helpful”

Service delivery

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

- It’s now more efficient and more organised
- There are more GPs so more choice
- Everything is fine
- You need to wait in a queue but not too bad on the telephone
- Everything is fine
- I'm quite happy with the service
- Good service
- When you get used to the service its good
- You have the option of either surgery which gives you more choice
- There is more doctors available which is a good thing

“Hasn't changed at all for me never had any problems before, it's good and always has been”

“Never had any problems with this practice”

“Everything is just the same - it's going well”

Appointments

The positive feedback we received on appointments is given below:

- Much quicker to get an appointment
- Can get an appointment easier and the phone is picked up in a reasonable time when making an appointment
- Can get an emergency appointment OK

“When I phone for an emergency appointment I always manage to get one especially for the kids”

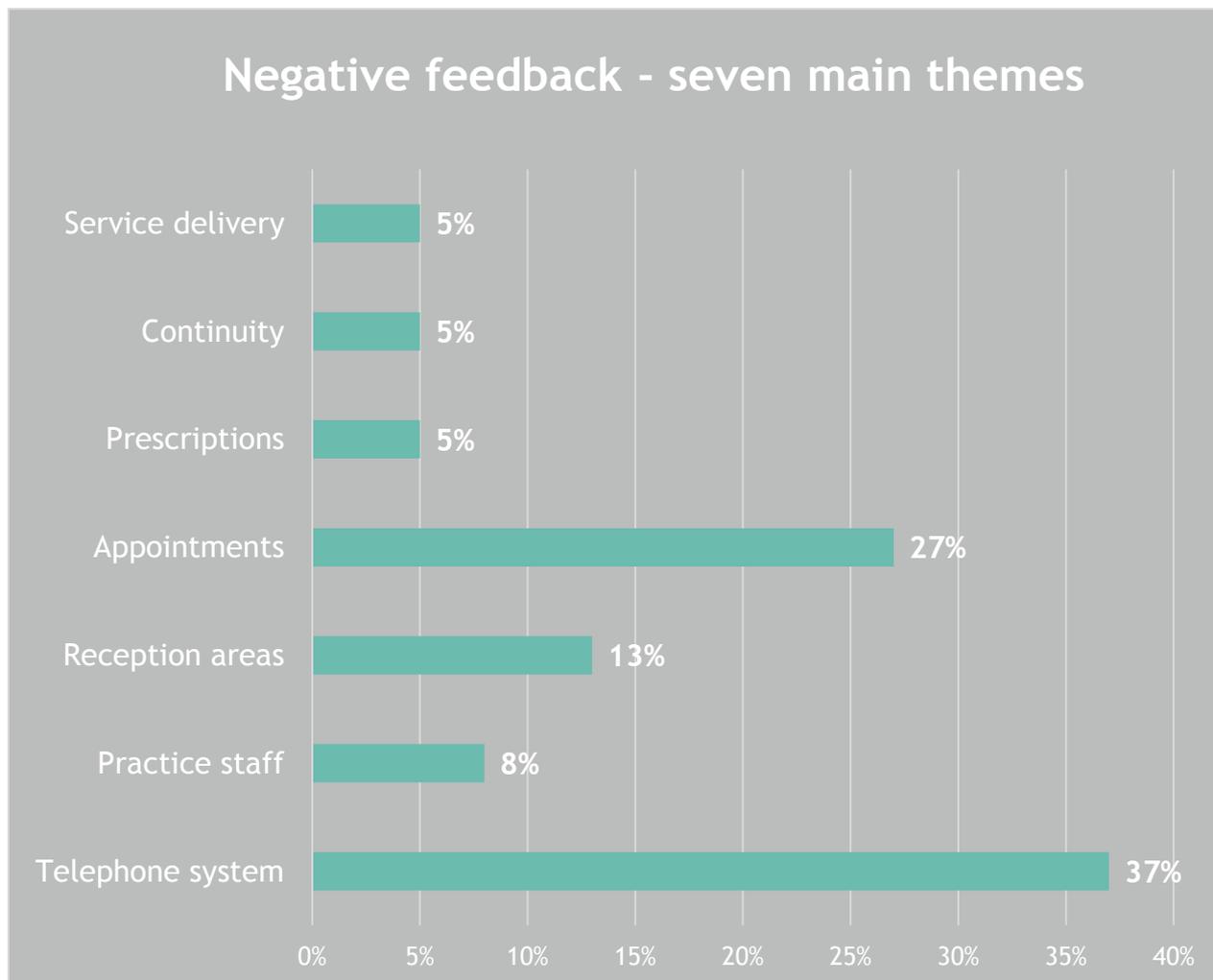
- When you get used to the service its good
- I get through on the phone easier and get an appointment straight away when normally I have had to wait a long time - more helpful overall. I hope this keeps up, much better - seem more concerned about your health now
- Alright service and alright appointments
- Don't come very often but haven't noticed much change, certainly no worse, can get an appointment OK (use online system)
- Get an appointment OK - no longer than before
- You don't wait long for an appointment

“Wait for the appointment is about the same, was offered an earlier appointment but I didn't know the GPs - it's good here”

“Phoned for an appointment - smashing, no problems”

Negative feedback received

Patients gave us examples of 90 pieces of negative feedback during our visits, we were able to group their responses into seven main themes. These were service delivery, continuity, prescriptions, appointments, reception/waiting areas, practice staff and the telephone system.



Service delivery

The negative feedback received regarding service delivery is given below:

- The service is a lot less personal than it used to be
- Service is not as personalised - there are changes to times
- You need to call for different services at different times this is difficult if you work
- It used to have a family feel, now it's not as good

"It was a personal service and nicer environment, I miss the other reception staff"

Continuity

The negative feedback we received on continuity is given below:

- It takes a while to see the regular nurses, others are lovely but I have to explain everything to them
- No continuity to see same GPs
- They used to know who I was and offered a personalised service, they don't know me now. I've seen three different doctors at last three appointments and they don't know my history. I'm thinking of changing GP

“My mam has Alzheimer’s so the inconsistency of differing doctors affects her”

“There is no continuity of care”

Prescriptions

The negative feedback we received on prescriptions is given below:

- I have also had issues with prescriptions
- Also had issues with prescriptions
- I have had a bit of bother with scripts and the girls don't know me
- I have to wait 48 hours for my tablets it wasn't like this before

“Things have been missing off my repeat prescription”

Appointments

The negative feedback we received on for appointments is given below:

- You have to wait two weeks for an appointment by which time you are better
- Harder to get appointments compared to before
- Things have gone downhill since the merger. I can wait up to five weeks for an appointment, I complained and got an appointment the next day
- It now seems too big and more difficult to get an appointment
- You need to ring at 8.30 for an appointment, you wait a long time to get through and when you do there are none left. They used to keep appointments for evenings for those people who work and they don't now

“The wait for appointments is too long”

“To get an appointment with the doctors you know, you have to wait longer”

“I can't get an appointment - it's much worse than before”

- I have an appointment for an injection every three months and used to book appointment for next one straight after the appointment but I can't do that now and have to book later
- I have to wait longer for an appointment
- It's harder to get an appointment
- Being a patient for over 40 years staff knew you and would get you in if you were poorly, you struggle to get an appointment now
- Only been a couple of times but had to wait a while for an appointment, receptionist did apologise at the time
- You have to wait two weeks to get an appointment with Dr Thomas
- Getting an appointment is difficult even when you were promised it wouldn't be
- Definitely not as good as it used to be
- You wait a long time to get an appointment
- You wait longer for an appointment, over a week, it used to be 2-3 days
- They never run on time
- To see a female doctor it is a 2-5 week wait
- The two week wait to get an appointment has caused issues for my wife who needs regular injections and now waits too long
- Used to wait a couple of days for an appointment now it's longer

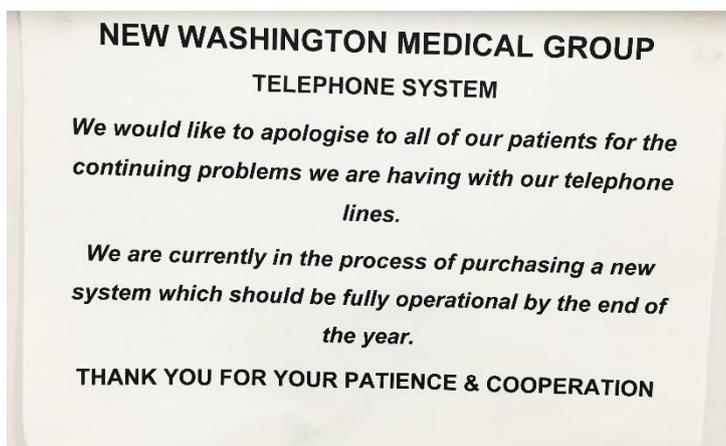
"They used to fit you in for an appointment and waited no longer than a week, now you wait two weeks"

"It's a two week wait for an appointment it used to be the same day or a couple of days wait"

"It was better before due to the length of time to get an appointment"

"Appointments are not as good, as you wait longer than before"

"Waiting time for appointments is longer"



Sign displayed in waiting informing patients about the telephone systems

Waiting/reception areas

The negative feedback we received about the two waiting/reception areas is given below:

- I don't like the two waiting rooms
- The rooms difficult to navigate at first
- I don't like coming here, as I don't know where to go
- You have to go to different waiting rooms whereas before you just went to the one place and I don't like it
- The waiting rooms can be confusing for the elderly
- Not sure where I'm meant to be with the two waiting areas
- The waiting rooms are confusing
- Having two receptions is silly

"It's a bit confusing with two rooms - I got lost"

"There is confusion over which waiting room you need to be in"

"I liked the other surgery better, we were in one place. I don't know where I am here"

Telephone System

The negative feedback we received regarding the telephone system is given below:

- There are problems with phone systems
- There are problems with phone lines when trying to make an appointment
- Issues with the telephone, difficult to get through on the phone to make an appointment
- Can't get through on the phone when trying to make an appointment
- You can't get through on the phone, there is a recorded message and then the phone cuts off
- I can't get through on the phone, it just rings out and doesn't tell you where you are in the queue as it did previously
- It's difficult to get through on the phone and I have to wait longer for an appointment

"There are issues with the phone systems"

"You can't get through on the phone, there is recorded message and then the phone cuts off"

"When you ring for an appointment you can't get through - I just give up in the end"

- The phones are horrendous, the phone rang for 20 minutes before it was answered
- You can't get through on the telephone and wait longer for appointments
- I can't get through on the phone but have seen the signs up in the surgery about this
- Getting an appointment and the telephone systems are a struggle
- It's on the up now but not good straight after, the telephone system still has issues
- When you ring for an appointment you can't get through, I just give up in the end
- You can't get through on the phone so I came in to make an appointment but was told there was none left and to ring in the morning but you can't get through on the phone
- It takes a long time to get through on the phone
- The telephone system is frustrating
- It's difficult to get through on the phone and to get an appointment
- It's nowhere near as good, I used to be able to get through on the phone
- You have to wait for the phone to be answered and then cuts you off. This is very frustrating
- Phone issues so came into the surgery to book an appointment
- Difficult to get through on the phone
- Takes ages to answer the phone - I had to phone twice to get through
- The telephone line is a nightmare
- You can't get through on the phone - it just cuts you off
- You wait a long time for the phone to be picked up when phoning for an appointment

"I am aware of the telephone problems but it is harder to get in touch and get an appointment with the doctor now"

"It took me three goes to get through on the phone to order prescriptions last week"

"The telephone system is not good but I'm aware they are changing this"

"Phoned yesterday for an appointment, had to phone three times as phone rang but nobody picked up"

"You can't get through on the phone, they should have had this sorted before the merger and not six months down the line"

Practice staff

The negative feedback we received regarding the practice staff is given below:

- I don't like the attitudes of the reception staff and I have spoken to practice manager about this. I used to have a personal relationship with staff this has all gone now
- Customer service is not as good
- The surgery staff missed some of my paperwork, so there was a delay in the treatment that I needed
- The receptionists don't know me and can be quite abrupt
- Not sure about the reception staff yet feel they are not as professional as the previous staff

“Receptionists used to say their name when answering the phone - this doesn't appear to happen now”

“I preferred the original receptionist”

Neutral feedback received

Patients gave us examples of eight pieces of neutral feedback during our visits, these were around appointments and service delivery.

Here are the neutral comments we received:

- Not noticed any changes - service is OK as long as I know where I am going
- Just have to wait as long for an appointment - same as before
- I haven't noticed any changes x2
- Don't come in very often, so haven't noticed any changes x2

“I haven't noticed any changes as I don't come that often”

“Bit confusing at first but it's OK”

6. Information and signposting

During the Healthwatch Sunderland engagement sessions the team spoke to patients who required some signposting to outside organisations.

To support them Healthwatch Sunderland felt it was important to inform and signpost 16 patients to the GP Extended Access Service, all of whom were unaware of the availability of this new service and having difficulty getting a GP appointment when they needed one.

In addition to this we also signposted 3 patients to patient access, 1 patient to equipment services and advised two ladies to speak to either reception staff or practice manager, to inform that their family members may require reasonable adjustments to be made due to their mental ill health and autism.

7. Appendices

Patient survey

The New Silksworth Medical Practice

How are things going since the merger?

Have you noticed any changes in the service you are now receiving at the GP practice since the merger a year ago?

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

Response from New Washington Medical Group

NEW WASHINGTON MEDICAL GROUP

DR A K MADATHIL

DR N J BHATT

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DR N RAY

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Ms Margaret Curtis

Healthwatch Sunderland

14th December 2018

Dear Ms Curtis

Thank you for your report and the support of the Healthwatch Sunderland engagement team in compiling this and as a practice we have discussed the results and would like to give the following feedback.

It was pleasing to see the positive feedback from our patients regarding their relationships and trust towards the GP's.

Service Delivery had some positive comments and many patients not noticing much change. However reception staff were noticed as not having as personal relationships as in the past but as time passes due to rotation of staff and duties they should become more familiar with most of the patients.

The two reception areas appear to be a problem. We are aware of this and have looked at closing reception 2 from the public and use it as a waiting room only however reception 1 could not accommodate the volume of patients attending for appointments or collecting prescriptions, we are still looking at a solution.

Negative feedback from the telephones system was the highest of the comments. The practice identified immediately that the current telephone system is not robust enough for the volume of patients trying to get through. We then sourced new systems and are pleased to inform everyone that a new system will be installed towards the end of January 2019, the new telephone number will be 0191 5634929. We envisage this will resolve all the existing issues they are currently experiencing.

Some patients found that the waiting times for appointments had extended. We believe this to be the result of three practices working with different systems and now a restructured system is in place we look daily at the appointments available and release routine appointments whenever possible.

On a positive note we hope that as the practice is developing as a team and with further training and development New Washington Medical Group will be a practice we can all be proud of.

Yours sincerely

New Washington Medical Group

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