



HYWEL DDA

Fishguard Health Centre

Visit report

October 2019

About Hywel Dda Community Health Council (CHC)

We represent independently and without bias the interests of patients and the public in the way that NHS services are planned and provided across the counties of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.

Our volunteer members who live in the communities we serve are supported by a small team of staff who work together to:

- Carry out regular visits to health services, talking to the people using the service and the people providing the care to influence the changes that can make a big difference;
- Get involved with health service managers when they are planning service developments and larger scale service change to emphasise the patients view right from the start;
- Provide free and confidential support through complaints advocacy if things go wrong and if the health service complaints process isn't working;
- Reach out more widely to patients and their families across communities to provide information, and to gather views and experiences so that we can represent your interests to health service managers and to policy makers.

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Background

Fishguard Health Centre is located in the town of Fishguard located on Ropewalk, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, SA65 9BT

Fishguard Health Centre consists of 1 senior doctor and 5 salaried doctors as well as a team of practice nurses.

The doctors and nurses at health centre often called the 'clinical team' or clinicians. They are supported in their work, to deliver care, by a Practice Manager and a range of reception and administrative staff.

A community health care team also works out of the same building. This consists of midwives, district nurses and health visitors.

The surgery has 10,000 local residents who are registered at the practice and also patients in 5 local care homes.

Often people will go to the health centre to see a GP or nurse and they can also access a range of specialist clinics and other services. These include flu and chronic conditions, e.g. diabetes and asthma, as well as blood testing (phlebotomy) services, baby immunisation clinics, women's health etc.

The opening hours of the surgery are 8:30 am to 6:00 pm Monday to Friday.

Introduction

Fishguard surgery faced some changes in Spring 2019 when a nearby practice Goodwick Surgery merged with Fishguard Health Centre.

Before this merger happened, Goodwick surgery was managed by Hywel Dda University Health Board (the Health Board). This change took place after the retirement of a General Practitioner (GP) in 2015. The surgery's last remaining salaried GP resigned in December 2016.

The practice was then managed with a range of locum GPs and by using a telephone triage system. Despite extensive advertisement by the Health Board for a new GP in 2017, there were no applicants. As a result, the Health Board decided that running the surgery in Goodwick was no longer a practical option for them because of the difficulties in recruitment. The Health Board recognised that relying on locum doctors also meant that there was no continuity of care for patients and this was not helpful.

A period of extensive planning and preparation took place to allow the practices to identify how this situation could be resolved. This included meetings with patients to identify what people using the surgery thought about the changes. Health Board representatives, patients and Hywel Dda Community Health Council (the CHC) met to discuss how the two surgeries could merge to become one practice.

As part of these changes, Fishguard Health Centre was extensively refurbished to make sure that it could accommodate the additional patients from Goodwick surgery. Many of the staff from Goodwick Surgery transferred to Fishguard Health Centre.



CHC involvement at the time of change

When changes in health care systems are taking place, the CHC has a right to be involved in these kinds of 'service changes'. When we knew that the surgeries were going to be changing, we recognised that this could be unsettling for people using these services. As a result, the CHC was closely involved in the actions taken by the Health Board around this time.

The Health Board had a duty to speak to local people about what was happening and working with the CHC was part of this process. We made sure that the Health Board spoke to people in 'engagement events' and we also went along to these to hear what concerns and themes were covered in these discussions. We wanted to make sure that the Health Board considered people's views and opinions.

Local concerns that arose during this time were mostly about getting used to different doctors, nurses, appointment systems and there were also concerns about travel.

What we did

The CHC had been involved in discussions and engagement events about these changes in 2018. After the changes had taken place we decided that we needed to see what people's experience was like at Fishguard Health Centre. We recognised that after the changes had taken place and things should have settled down, it would be helpful for us to understand what people using the Health Centre now thought about their local health care services.

We visited Fishguard Health Centre on 2nd October 2019 to talk to patients about their experiences there. We also used a patient survey that people could complete in their own time, to let us know their views. This survey was available in the surgery for patients to take away and on our website.



We did not visit the surgery because we thought that there were problems or that things were going wrong. Instead, we wanted to understand what patients had to say several months after the changes had taken place.

We asked the GP surgery to encourage people to complete our patient survey (shown at Appendix 1). For a three week period, paper copies were left in the surgery for people to take away with them. 43 people completed the survey and 1 person completed the online survey.

We also visited the practice to hear directly from patients, family members and carers. On the day of our visit, we heard from 14 people. Most people had an appointment to see a GP. Most of these were emergency appointments. Some patients had appointments with the nurse. We also heard from the practice manager about the services provided at the surgery.

We wanted to chat to people to see what their experience was like. We wanted to understand how easy it was to get an appointment and what it was like to be a patient at the surgery now that it was under different ownership. We asked people what they thought was good and what could be better.

What people told us

Change and upheaval

Most people felt that even though there had been changes, they had not been affected them. A few people stated that the appointment system had changed but they did not all share the same views. Some felt that the appointment systems were now worse than what they had previously been used to.

Some people also stated that they had to travel further because of the closure of Goodwick surgery. People said that they felt that surgery staff were accommodating about travel, trying to fit people into appointments later in the morning rather than offering them the first few appointments.

“Appointment system changed but it seems to be working”

“Happy with the surgery since the merger but more doctors needed, there are a wide range of services”

“Making an appointment was easy, I transferred from Goodwick”

“Waiting time for an appointment seems worse since merger”.

“Minor injuries no longer on offer, INR in-house one-stop service very good”.

“Access to appointments and prescriptions have worsened”

Access to the surgery

We asked people about getting to the surgery. Everyone stated that access was good. A number of people said that parking could be difficult although there was street parking available. There were mixed views:

“Parking has always been a problem”

“Better car-park access for disabled ”

“No parking bays left by the time I got here”

People said there were not enough disabled bays and this could give them some problems.

Learning from what people told us

The surgery may wish to review their parking area to see if there is capacity for more disabled spaces.

The surgery should make people aware that there is a public car park next to the surgery

Opening times

Everyone we spoke to said that they thought the opening times of the surgery was good.

“Very happy with the opening times ”

“Opening times are good ”

“Yes happy with the opening times”

Telephone system

Often, when we speak with people about GP surgeries, we often hear that getting through to the GP surgery by telephone can be a problem. Often this is because lots of people are trying to phone to get a ‘same day’ appointment all at the same time.

In Fishguard Health centre we asked people to give us their views on the phone system and what it was like when they were trying to make an appointment.

There were mixed views on the phone system. Most people said that the phone was answered between 2-5 minutes.

“Sometimes can be quite difficult to get through”

“It can take a couple of minutes to get through in the morning”

“The phone system is ok”

“I don’t like to discuss personal things with the receptionist”

“Impersonal, on hold for too long”

Learning from what people told us

The practice should explain to people why reception staff need to ask them questions when they are booking an appointment. People can find this intrusive. Staff need to be reminded that this can be difficult for some people.

The appointment system

Once people have got through on the telephone, a common concern we also hear about is that people can still find it difficult to get an appointment. We wanted to see if patients could get appointments easily.

“Appointment system is ok. I can always get an appointment”

“Happy with the appointment system”

“Appointment system ok”

“Happy with the appointment system”

“They should look at a “patient calling system” when it’s your turn to see the doctor, doctors come out of their room and just call your name”

“Difficult in getting a routine appointment”

“Difficult in making a routine blood test for 4/ 6 weeks”.

We found that there were some mixed views in relation to the appointment system

“We could do with online appointments save us ringing up and trying to get through”

“Need more pre-bookable appointments, I waited 4 weeks to get a routine appointment ”

We were told that people didn't want to use emergency appointments unnecessarily. People could recognise that sometimes, when they needed to see a doctor, it didn't have to happen the same day. However, trying to plan an appointment in advance was not always easy.

Learning from what people told us

- The surgery may wish to consider using “My Health Online” as a system that people can use to book appointments without having to phone up.
- Lack of routine or pre-bookable appointments also seems to be a concern for some people. The surgery may want to find ways of making these more readily available. This may avoid people booking ‘same day’ appointments that they do not always want.

Waiting to be seen

Most people stated that the reception area was clean and had been recently refurbished because of the merger.

Some patients stated that could hear the conversations that the reception staff were having on the phones or with people coming into the surgery to make an appointment.

We noticed that the nurses and GPs were coming into the reception area to call patients because there was no intercom or call system in place.

There was no obvious private area for people to have more confidential discussions with staff. There were rooms available if patients wanted to discuss confidential matters with the receptionist, or if patients were in crisis but this was not something that all patients knew about.

When patients came into the surgery they had to speak to a receptionist to 'book in', so that staff knew that they had arrived. There was no 'booking in screen' or alternative system that people could use.

Learning from what people told us

- The surgery should review the waiting area arrangements to see if any changes can be made. These should focus on allowing patient's telephone calls to be dealt with confidentially by reception staff.
- The surgery needs to inform patients that they can speak to a member of staff in private. A clear sign or notice could allow this information to be widely shared.
- The surgery should consider some kind of call system for clinical staff to use rather than having clinical staff coming into the waiting area.
- The surgery should look into a self- booking system that patients can use when they enter the surgery.

Not all patients will use this but it may mean that not all people will need to speak to a member of staff.

Staff at the surgery including doctors and nurses

We asked people to tell us about the staff at the surgery which included reception staff, doctors and nurses. Nearly everyone told us that the staff were helpful and polite and they were very happy with the staff working at Fishguard:

“The staff are very helpful and pleasant”

“Staff are always polite helpful and reassuring”

“Staff are good and helpful”

“Very happy with the staff. Nurses are brilliant”

“All lovely”

The Environment

The environment was clean and tidy. The waiting area was large. It was possible to hear conversations that the receptionists were having with colleagues, other patients and on incoming telephone calls.

People were waiting to be seen by the receptionist for up to 4/ 5 minutes at times. This was usually because staff were taking telephone calls. For people booking in for

appointments, there was no alternative way to 'book in' and this could contribute to some delays.

The practice did have a hearing aid loop system in place for people with suitable hearing aids to use.

Learning from what people told us

Surgery staff need to bear in mind that conversations in reception can be overheard by people sitting in the waiting area. If an alternative approach to taking calls can be considered, this will enable confidential or sensitive matters to be dealt with in a more appropriate way.

Information and involvement

We did not see any posters/leaflets in the surgery explaining how people could provide feedback or raise a concern about their NHS experience. It is important that people have access to this information in their GP Surgery so that any issues can be dealt with quickly, through the right route.

We did not see any information on making an appointment. This again may be important for people who do not use the surgery frequently and who may not be aware of how they can do this.

The practice leaflet was available and did some information that helped them identify services veterans using the surgery.

There is no Patient Participation Group (PPG) at the practice. PPGs usually involve a group of patients and GP practice staff who meet regularly and work together to try to improve things for the benefit of patients using the surgery.

Learning from what people told us

- The surgery needs to have a suggestion box on display at the reception area so that people can bring ideas to the surgery.
- The surgery may also want to develop a system to make sure that a range of relevant information is readily available to people coming to the surgery.
- The surgery needs to consider introducing a Patient Participation Group as a way of letting patients get involved in developing the surgery further.

Summing up

We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to share their experiences with us.

We are also grateful to the surgery and their staff that made us feel welcome and helped us on the day we visited their busy place of work.

The people who shared their views and experiences with us were positive about the care and treatment provided by the healthcare staff in their GP practice.

The people who shared their views and experiences with us clearly appreciated the services provided in their GP surgery and valued the staff that care for them.

When we visit a surgery to speak to people, we hope that our findings are representative of the all people who use the

surgery. Nevertheless, we realise that this is only a snapshot of what we found on the day and other people may have different views and experiences.

If patients have more to add to our findings we always pleased to hear from them. Our contact details are included at the end of this report.

Hywel Dda Community Health Council

October 2019



PATIENT INTERVIEWS

Fishguard GP PRACTICE

Hywel Dda Community Health Council is talking to patients to find out what it is like to access services at your surgery. We are entirely independent of your surgery and do not need your name or contact details.

How happy are you with the following:	Very happy	Happy	It's ok	Unhappy	Very unhappy
Surgery opening times					
The waiting area					
Reception staff					
Access to the building					
Parking					

If you want to make any comments on any of the above, what are they?

How long have you been registered with the surgery and if you have only recently registered here, in the past 2 years, why did you change?

Tell us what it is like when you phone your surgery for any reason.

Tell us about the appointment system in the surgery

Tell us about the staff in the surgery – this can include doctors, nurses, receptionists or any other staff that you have seen here?

Have you noticed any changes in your GP surgery in the past year and if so how has this affected you? This may involve things which are good or bad from your viewpoint

Have you got any comments that you want to share with us about your local NHS in general eg hospitals, dentists, community care etc?



FISHGUARD PATIENT SURVEY

Hywel Dda Community Health Council is using a survey to find out what it is like to access services at your surgery. We are entirely independent of your surgery and do not need your name or contact details.

How happy are you with the following:	Very happy	Happy	It's ok	Unhappy	Very unhappy
Surgery opening times					
The waiting area					
Reception staff					
Access to the building					
Parking					

1. How long have you been registered with the surgery

- Less than 3 months
 3 - 12 months
 1-2 years
 2-5 years
 5 years +

If you have been registered less than 2 years, where were you registered before and why did you change?

.....

When you phone your surgery for any reason, how long do you have to wait before you get through to a person?

- Less than 2 mins 2-5 mins 5-10 mins 10 mins +

2. If you phone for an appointment, do you go through a telephone triage system before getting an appointment? (*Telephone triage is a system where someone asks you for your reason for calling before giving you an appointment or arranges for someone to call you back?*)

- Yes No I'm unsure

3. How easy is it to make a routine appointment?

- Very easy Easy It's ok Difficult Very difficult I don't know

4. How long do you have to wait to see a doctor for a routine appointment?

- Less than 48 hours Under a week 1-2 weeks 2-3 weeks More than 3 weeks

5. When booking a routine appointment have you been offered an appointment with someone instead of a doctor?

- Yes, this often happens Yes this sometimes No this has not happened I would like to be given this option when booking

6. When you book a routine appointment how easy is it to get an appointment on a particular day of the week/time of the day e.g. mornings/evenings?

Very easy Easy It's ok Difficult Very difficult I don't know

7. How easy is it to access an emergency/same day appointment?

Very difficult Easy It's ok Difficult Very easy I don't know

8. Have you ever failed to get an emergency/same day appointment?

Yes No

If Yes what did you do instead?

Tried again the next day Went to the A&E instead Saw a pharmacist Other

9. How easy is it to speak to a health care professional (doctor or nurse) by telephone?

Very easy Easy It's ok Difficult Very difficult I don't know

10. How easy is it to have a home visit if you needed one?

Very difficult Easy It's ok Difficult Very easy I don't know

12. How easy is it to order a repeat prescription?

Very difficult Easy It's ok Difficult Very easy I don't know

13. Do you have any difficulties with getting to the surgery?

Yes No

14. Do you use My Health Online? (tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to make appointments	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to order prescriptions	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know what this is	<input type="checkbox"/> I've heard of it but don't use it	I don't think my surgery has this
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Have you noticed any changes in your GP surgery in the past year and if so how has this affected you? This may involve things which are good or bad from your viewpoint

**Please tell us about your experience with any other NHS Service
(e.g. Hospitals, Outpatient Clinics, Dentist etc.)**

Contact us

ABERYSTWYTH OFFICE

**Welsh Government Building
Rhodfa Padarn
Llanbadarn Fawr
ABERYSTWYTH
Ceredigion
SY23 3UR**

01646 697610

MILFORD HAVEN OFFICE

**Suite 18 Cedar Court
Havens Head Business
Park
Milford Haven
Pembrokeshire
SA73 3LS**

01646 697610

CARMARTHEN OFFICE

**Suite 5, Ty Myrddin
Old Station Road
Carmarthen
SA31 1BT**

01646 697610

Email us at hyweldda@waleschc.org.uk

HDDComplaints.Advocacy@waleschc.org.uk

Website www.communityhealthcouncils.org.uk/hyweldda



@HywelDdaCHC

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