



CYNGOR IECHYD CYMUNED
COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

HYWEL DDA

**Llynyfran Surgery
Llandysul,
Ceredigion**

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 patient 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

Llynyfran Surgery is on the outskirts of Llandysul in south Ceredigion. It is a GP surgery which is called a training practice because it helps qualified doctors, known as registrars, finish their training to become GPs. The surgery is also able to train medical students during their medical degree studies, before they become fully qualified doctors.

The doctors and nurses at the Surgery are 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.

The opening times at the main surgery are 9:00am until 6:00pm Monday to Friday.

Introduction

We visited Llynyfran Surgery on 31 July 2019 to talk to patients about their experiences there. We also used a patient survey that people could fill in, in their own time, to tell us their views. This survey was available in the surgery for patients to take away and a linked survey was also available on-line on our website.

In February 2019, a neighbouring GP practice, Teifi Surgery, closed down. This meant that nearly 4500 of its patients had to move to Llynyfran surgery. When changes like this take place, it can create concerns for people. People using the surgery may have to deal with new ways of getting appointments or other new systems. These changes can also be a challenge for the surgery staff when they have to deliver health care and deal with a large number of new patients.

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 6 months after the changes had taken place.

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 Teifi surgery was at risk of closing, the CHC was closely involved in the actions taken by Hywel Dda Health Board (the Health Board).

The Health Board had a duty to speak to local people and then decide how GP services would be provided to people who would be affected by the closure of Teifi Surgery. 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 worries.

When the decision was made to relocate patients to Llynnyfran surgery (and other local practices) we spoke to a number of people who contacted us because they were concerned about the arrangements that had been made for them by the Health Board.

Local concerns that arose during this time were mostly about whether Llynnyfran surgery could deal with so many new patients. Would there be enough doctors, nurses and appointments? How would people get there? Would there be enough parking?

What we did

When we decided to visit Llynyfran to see what impact these changes had meant for people, we asked the GP surgery to encourage people to complete our patient survey (shown at appendix 1) in the 2 weeks before we visited. We also talked about our visit with the practice manager.

We visited the practice on 31 July to hear directly from patients, family members and carers, speaking with people in the waiting area.

On the day of our visit, we heard from 22 people. About half were new to the practice and half had been on the practice list for some years. Most people had an appointment to see a GP, but some had appointments with the nurse. Fourteen survey forms were returned.

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 more people had joined. We asked people what they thought was good and what could be better.

On the day of our visit, we worked alongside an inspection team from Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW). Their focus was looking at clinical standards. Their report on the surgery can be found on their website: <https://hiw.org.uk/>

What people told us

Change and upheaval

Whilst many people told us that they were aware of the changes that had taken place and had been unsettled by them, most told us that they were comfortable with the way the surgery was running. A few people told us that they felt that their patient experience was worse because of the change.

For those people who had moved to Llynyfran from Teifi surgery, they were pleased that they could keep seeing some of the staff that they had seen in their surgery before. This was because a number of staff from Teifi Surgery had moved to Llynyfran too.

"It is a big change for me, since I attended Teifi Surgery for nearly 50 years. On the whole the new surgery seems fine"

Another patient said;

"(The) other surgery in the village closed, patients transferred to our surgery. This makes it much more difficult to get an appointment and then park if and when you get to see a doctor"

Someone else reported;

"Two surgeries have combined together in the last year, I have not experienced any problems"

Sitting in the waiting area on the morning of our visit, the practice was busy but the large and open waiting areas in the building were not overwhelmed with people and noise levels were fairly low. There was no evidence of significant queues at reception and neither were there signs that people were frustrated as they spoke with reception staff.

People said they were happy with the environment and atmosphere in waiting areas. No one reported experiences where the building felt cramped or uncomfortable.

A number of people said that parking could be difficult. When we looked at the parking area there were very few free spaces. We noticed that there were cars frequently arriving or leaving and there weren't queues of cars waiting to find a space.

The practice manager told us that clinics and appointments schedule had been carefully arranged to try to avoid lots of people needing to turn up at the same time. This approach seems to have worked although some people said they had needed to park on the road outside the practice at times.

Another person said that cars parking on the road had created problems when children were going to school nearby. This meant it could be difficult for parents with prams or young children to get past the cars parked on or near pavements.

Learning from what people told us

The Practice should continue to manage flows of patients at busy times to reduce pressures on parking.

The appointment system

Often, when we speak with people about GP changes, getting an appointment is one of their biggest concerns. We wanted to understand if Llynnyfran patients were affected by this. As mentioned above, clinics and appointments are managed to try to even out numbers of patients accessing the surgery.

We heard very mixed views from people about getting appointments. People tended to find emergency appointments easier to get than routine appointments.

About half of the people said that it could take 2 to 3 weeks or more for a routine appointment.

Generally people said that they could get through to someone on the telephone within 5 minutes. Some said it took much longer, one saying that phones could be very busy on Thursday mornings.

Most people told us they were happy or very happy with opening times. Some people said they would like more flexibility for later or evening appointments because they worked during the day. We were encouraged to hear that a reasonable proportion of people used "My Health Online" to book appointments.

Learning from what people told us

- The practice should keep its appointment arrangements under review with input from patients.
- The practice should consider arrangements for 'extended hours' appointments for people unable to take time off work during weekdays

Waiting to be seen

Generally people were content with their experience as they waited to be seen. The turnover of patients was relatively quick and during our visit we had to cut short a number of discussions when people were called for their appointment.

Some people don't like the electronic screen to "check-in" on arrival. They preferred to speak with a member of the reception team face-to-face but thought that sometimes reception staff were slow coming to the desk from office areas to greet them.

One person said that they didn't like their name displayed on the screen because it identified them to others in the waiting area.

Learning from what people told us

- The practice should monitor the reception area to ensure that patients who choose not to use the automated check-in screen are seen promptly.

Patient care

The people we spoke with were generally very positive about the caring, helpful and professional approach from staff at all levels of the practice.

On one of our surveys a parent of a young child wrote;

"We were lucky enough to see (a Llynnyfran GP) here and I felt compelled to provide feedback because they were so lovely with my son. A friendly and lovely bedside manner, thorough chat with me about symptoms and helpful advice when discussing options for treatment."

Although there were relatively few negative things said about the care from or help from staff we did hear some concerns.

One person told us that reception staff could be inconsistent in their approach, for example if the doctor said that a further appointment was needed, some receptionists would make the appointment there and then, whilst another would tell the patient to go home and telephone later.

Another person said that appointments could feel rushed and they felt their presence was "a bit of a burden".

One individual said that as a parent and carer of a patient who saw nursing staff regularly, she felt that some nurses were more competent than others.

We were also told by one patient that their diabetic clinic appointments had been cancelled six times which was inconvenient.

Learning from what people told us

The practice should:

- Share our report with its staff and thank them for the good things we heard about but at the same time consider the negative comments
- Ensure that patients are encouraged to feedback their experiences of care to the practice. The practice needs to review this information regularly and show how it has listened and changed things.

Information and involvement

We found that the practice's website was clear and helpful in terms of the services and clinics offered. It provided a range of useful information and was easy to navigate.

We did note (at time of writing) that the website pages which introduce different staff had not been updated. This meant that there were no details of the staff who had joined the practice. Some of the items of "news" were 2 or 3 years old.

We are concerned that perhaps some other areas of the website containing important information for patients may also need updating.

Given that the practice has gone through such a major change and that some patients have some worries about these changes, we feel that there is an opportunity to use the website to update patients on developments and invite feedback.

The CHC is also generally keen to see practices having their own Patient Participation Groups. These provide ways for patients to regularly discuss with practice staff some of the niggles and issues that they have. It can then let the practice look at these and do something about them before they become bigger matters.

Learning from what people told us

The practice should

- Update its website to include current information on staff
- Use the website more as a way of communicating with patients about the changes that have taken place
- Consider introducing a Patient Participation Group (PPG).

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 who 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 clearly appreciated the services provided in their GP surgery and valued the staff that care for them.

It is clear that Llynyfran Surgery has gone through a very challenging time. Some patients seemed unaffected by this change, others said that this had impacted on them negatively. Whilst people can be very frustrated about changes at their GP surgery, most patients (even those with some concerns) understood how and why the surgery was trying to deal with these changes.

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. 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**



**GP SURGERY
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?

.....

2. 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 +

3. 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

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

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

5. 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

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

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

7. 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

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

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

9. 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

10. 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

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

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

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

- Very easy Easy It's ok Difficult Very difficult 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)

- Yes, to make appointments Yes, to order prescriptions I don't know what this is I've heard of it but don't use it I don't think my surgery has it

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.)



**GP SURGERY
PATIENT
INTERVIEWS**

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 her, 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?

Llynyfran Surgery would like to thank the CHC for their support during the closure of 2 local surgeries. When Llynyfran became aware of the neighbouring practice closure, we were committed in providing continued service to our community. We were aware of the challenges faced and understood patient concerns.

All staff from Teifi joined the practice in February, this was to ensure continuity of care to transferring patients. We also purchased the automated check-in screen as patients from Teifi were familiar with this system.

Practice comments to patient feedback:

The practice should continue to manage flows of patients at busy times to reduce pressures on parking:

- Llynyfran anticipated parking issues for existing Llynyfran patients who are used to having this facility. We are in the process of building an extension for extra clinical rooms, we will also gain an extra 12 parking spaces. We will continue to assess the parking situation.

The practice should keep its appointment arrangements under review with input from patients:

- We appreciate suggestions from patients on ways of improving our service, a suggestion box located in the front entrance lobby. Following information from this report the Practice Manager will occasionally sit in the waiting room area to allow patients opportunity to discuss concerns or to feedback what is working well.
We acknowledge Thursday mornings are the busiest day, due to pre-bookable (week in advance) appointments become available. We have addressed this issue by increasing the number of phone lines and staff. We have approximately 25% of patients registered for my health on-line service allowing patients to order repeat medication and booking appointments. Patients will also receive SMS text messages for appointment reminders, chronic disease clinic invite appointments and health promotion.

The practice should consider arrangements for 'extended hours' appointments for people unable to take time off work during weekdays.

- **Welsh government Guidelines to ' Access to in-hours General Medical Services'**

Standard 7

People receive a timely, co-ordinated and clinically appropriate response to their needs.

URGENT- people who are clinically triaged as requiring an urgent assessment are offered a same day consultation.

PRE-BOOKABLE – The offer of a pre-bookable consultation must be available and should routinely be within 2 – 3 weeks. However, it could be available up to 6 weeks in advance.

Our appointment system offer some pre-bookable appointments 4 weeks in advance and 1 week in advance and on the day appointment for acute/urgent symptoms.

We regularly monitor our appointment system and have evening appointments available for workers. We have recently introduced a system allowing MHOL patients access to late appointments.

The Practice should monitor the reception area to ensure that patients who choose not to use the automated check-in screen are seen promptly.

- We are in the process of extending our reception desk area to provide a suitable working environment for a member of staff to be available to monitor reception during surgery hours.

Share our report with its staff and thank them for the good things we heard about but at the same time consider the negative comments.

- Report shared with all members of the practice team, Llynnyfran are proud to have committed and loyal members of staff.
- Training requirements will be addressed during staff appraisals.
- Practice to run search to highlight any diabetic patients, who have had numerous appointments cancelled by the practice and send apology if identified.

Ensure that patients are encouraged to feedback their experiences of care to the practice. The practice needs to review this information regularly and show how it has listened and changed things.

- Suggestion box located in front entrance lobby for concerns/suggestions/compliments.
- Questionnaires routinely provided during GP annual appraisal, nurse re-validation and GP registrar/medical students.
- Practice access questionnaire undertaken within last 12 months.
- CHC and HIW questionnaire completed within last 6 months.

Update its website to include current information on staff, use the website more as a way of communicating with patients about the changes that have taken place.

- Arrange training to develop website in-house, for greater flexibility and control of updating website.
- Update website with changes and include introduction of new staff members and roles.

Consider introducing a Patient Participation Group (PPG)

- Practice would appreciate guidance on developing PPG. We have a Patient Walking Group that provide informal feedback on services.

Contact us

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