



CYNGOR IECHYD CYMUNED
COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

HYWEL DDA

**New Quay
Surgery
Visit Report
November 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 National Health Services (NHS) 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



New Quay surgery is situated close to the centre of the coastal town in the county of Ceredigion in west Wales. It can be very busy in summer with tourists arriving in large numbers and this increases the amount of people wanting an appointment. Two General Practitioners work in the surgery with a current vacancy for another doctor. A nurse practitioner was recently employed to support the work of the doctors. The clinical team is supported by a practice manager and a range of reception and administrative staff. The opening times at the main surgery are 9:00am until 6:30pm Monday to Friday.

Introduction

This report sets out our findings from a visit to New Quay Surgery on November 6th 2019 and a patient survey that we used at the same time. It is important to note that we did not visit because we thought that things were going wrong.

Instead, we were keen to understand what patients had to say given that a number of practices in south Ceredigion have been under pressure following closures of GP surgeries in the surrounding area. This has meant that some practices like New Quay have had to take on more patients. Additionally, the practice manager noted that they had also seen increasing numbers of patients wanting to join from another local practice. The list size at New Quay is now approximately 5,300.

What we did

We asked the GP surgery to encourage people to complete a patient survey in the 2 weeks before we visited.

We visited the practice on the 6th of November 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 12 people. 17 survey forms were returned to us.

We used some basic questions to structure our discussions with patients. We were keen to understand how easy it was to get an appointment and what it was like to be a patient at the practice given that many GP surgeries are getting busier. We asked people what they thought was good and what could be better.

What people told us

Getting an appointment

The process of seeing a doctor at New Quay surgery is relatively unique compared with many GP practices we visit.

Whilst most surgeries ask patients to ring ahead to book an appointment, New Quay runs an “open surgery” system where patients simply arrive at the practice and wait to be seen. There are some pre-bookable appointments available for patients who have a specific need for them.

It was interesting to hear what patients had to say about this. We were surprised but pleased to hear that those we spoke to (and those who completed our survey) were overwhelmingly in favour of this simple but apparently very effective system. People said:

“Having open appointments is a privilege”

“Open surgery is wonderful”

“The open surgery works really well, never had to wait long”

“The open surgery is fabulous, works really well for employed people”

“I tend not to use appointments; I prefer the open access system”

“I like both systems, open is great for access”

There were few complaints or negative comments about appointments and access. This is unusual when so many people we speak to are frustrated by appointment systems that can be difficult to navigate. One person who responded to our survey said:

“It’s busier –more patients have joined the surgery so waiting times last over 2/3 hours”

However, most people seemed very happy with the system.

We asked whether an open surgery limited the choice of GPs for patients because the two GPs rotate the running of clinics each day. Patients told us that it was a simple choice for them as they could ring the surgery and an automated message told them which GP was in clinic that day. They had a simple choice to either see the GP available on the day or wait for the next day. Most people we spoke with didn't have a preference for the GP they saw. Whilst we appreciate that this system wouldn't necessarily work everywhere, the level of patient satisfaction around access from those we spoke with was notable.

Contacting the practice

The open surgery at the practice seemed to reduce many of the difficulties that patients of other practices report when calling busy or complicated phone systems. At other practices we have heard patients reporting long waits or automated telephone queues when they call. They also sometimes comment on their dealings with reception staff who may be seen as "gatekeepers" to appointments and who may be a source of frustration.

Whilst a small number of patients of New Quay surgery told us that it could take a while to get through during busy periods, the vast majority said it was easy to speak with staff. It was clear that the open surgery approach meant that patients did not feel as if they were in "competition" for appointments. This also seemed to reduce pressure on reception staff.

"Phoning is easy"

"I sometimes wait a few minutes, but it's no problem"

"It normally takes a few seconds to speak to a receptionist"

"Fine, no problem at all, it's simple"

The practice hasn't fully put in place the "My Health Online" system yet. We note that there may not currently be huge demand for this amongst patients, as the open access system seemingly reduces the demand for bookable appointments. We've noted that patients in other practices are increasingly finding "My Health Online" useful, particularly for managing repeat prescriptions or accessing information about their records.

Learning from what people told us

The practice should consider promoting and using "My Health Online" so that patients have more ways of interacting with their GP practice.

Waiting to be seen

We sat in the waiting room and took time to see what this felt like from a patient's viewpoint. It was quiet on the day we visited (we appreciate that it becomes busier in summer). The open waiting area was relaxed, clean and airy. There was small area for children to play and patients reported that they liked the clear screen display which called them through to see the doctor.

We noticed that the open and quiet waiting room meant that it was easy to overhear people speaking with receptionists.

We asked patients about this when we spoke to them and we also raised this with the practice manager. He told us that there is a second reception desk to the side of the main desk which people can use if they need more privacy. The patients we spoke with were aware of this and didn't raise any concerns with us about privacy and dignity.

Learning from what people told us

Although the patients we spoke to didn't seem concerned, there is a need to remind new and existing patients about the second reception desk if they need more privacy.

Staff at the surgery including doctors and nurses

It was clear amongst the patients we spoke with that staff and clinicians were well thought of. Once again we heard universal praise and not a single negative comment. On our survey where we asked people to tell us about their experience of dealing with the staff one person said;

"Not just "very happy" absolutely delighted. I have never before met such happy helpful staff"

As mentioned earlier, we didn't hear any examples of frustration with receptionists:

"Always got on with them, always been fabulous"

"No Rottweilers here!"

In terms of the relationship with their doctor, patients were again very positive. We were interested to find out whether the pressure of people waiting in an open surgery system might make people feel that their appointment times had to be hurried. We didn't hear any concerns from patients along those lines:

"You don't get a conveyor belt feeling"

"Seems caring, you feel special to him, not rushed"

We were keen to understand whether the departure of a senior GP partner had impacted on the patient experience. Most people we spoke to said they hadn't noticed much difference as patients. Nevertheless, some felt the practice was getting busier.

"No changes noticed, always a high standard"

"One GP down but no change"

One patient mentioned the positive impact of the nurse practitioner:

"One of our three doctors retired but thankfully a female nurse practitioner was employed; this was good particularly to take pressure off the two remaining doctors and favourable for female complaints!"

Another patient did have concerns around some traditional services being discontinued at the practice. Noting that ear syringing and leg ulcer clinics were no longer operated from the practice:

"It seems our General Practitioners do less and less for their patients"

Acknowledging this, it is important to mention that most other GP practices have stopped providing these services as they do not have to provide them as part of their General Medical Services (GMS) contract. However, as with most GP surgeries we feel that often more can (and should) be done to engage with patients about changes that are happening and how patients can access alternative arrangements if they need to.

Learning from what people told us

We'd like the overwhelmingly positive comments that we heard to be shared with all staff at the practice. It was clear that patients we spoke with value the caring and helpful approach.

Parking

This is a common issue for patients in many different NHS settings and the people we spoke to in New Quay said they had some minor concerns about parking. The surgery is located next to a large Council-owned car park which was quiet during our visit, but can be busy during summer months and expensive according to patients. There are a small number of practice-owned spaces but these are often filled quickly.

"It's annoying that we pay but accept it's a tourist area"

This didn't seem to be a big issue for most patients but some felt it was inconvenient to have to find change to pay for parking when they needed to see their doctor. One person reported their frustration at being fined.

We were pleased to hear that there was a bus stop on the road very close to the practice and some patients told us that they used this.

Information and involvement

In the waiting area we were pleased to see a prominent carers' noticeboard with helpful information presented bilingually. There were other displays with useful information (e.g. promoting seasonal flu vaccination etc.). There was a screen which provided information for patients but this wasn't easy to see from some seats in the waiting area.

One issue which we were concerned about was the website for the Practice that we found on-line. It contained information that needed updating and some pages apparently hadn't been updated since 2006. We feel that this needs to be corrected quickly. Whilst we didn't hear any concerns from patients during our visit, people frequently look at websites for information and therefore it should be up to date and accurate.

Additionally, we feel that the Practice could do more to get regular feedback from patients. Although we heard very positive comments during our visit and through our survey, getting a wider range of views from patients over a longer time period could be helpful.

Learning from what people told us

The Practice should review the content on its website as soon as possible.

The Practice should consider ways of engaging more effectively with patients. This could involve asking for feedback and showing how that feedback has been listened to.

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.

"You always get a good service from this surgery"

Our visit to New Quay surgery was one of the most positive we have undertaken, with an array of encouraging comments such as the one above. All staff should reflect on the praise we heard.

We were equally struck by how the open surgery system was valued by the patients we spoke with.

We felt that the Practice needed to do more to use modern technology for patients. Whilst there doesn't seem to be a huge demand for it at the moment, it is likely that this will be important to more people in the future.

We also think there are ways for the practice to get more involved with patients and get more feedback about their experiences.

In general, it was good to hear so many positive comments but we know that there are pressures for GPs in the area. Demand for appointments continues to grow and it is difficult to recruit GPs to come into the area to replace GPs when they retire or leave.

We were pleased to hear that patients generally felt the practice was coping well following the departure of a GP. We know that other practices in the area are struggling and if the number of patients at New Quay continues to increase, the demands on staff will also grow. We know the Practice is very aware of this and is taking steps to try to avoid future challenges. We also know that Hywel Dda University Health Board is also working to ensure that GP services remain sustainable in the area and the CHC will maintain its focus on this issue.

When we visit a surgery to speak with patients or ask them to complete our surveys, we hope that our findings represent what patients feel. We also realise that this is only a snapshot and 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
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?

NEW QUAY SURGERY – RESPONSE TO HDCHC REPORT

Thank you for sending the CHC visit report, I have printed this off for Drs and staff and also thinking of leaving a copy in the waiting room for patients to see.

When I have discussed the report with the Drs I will provide some feedback but generally I am delighted with the observations and take on board the suggestions.

Best Regards,

Pete Kemp
Practice Manager

New Quay Surgery
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We are collectively very happy with the report which shows the surgery in a positive way and demonstrates how highly our patients think of us.

I was hoping to get additional comments from individual clinicians but most simply echoed my thoughts, so as time has now progressed and we have greater issues to concern us we would be happy for you to publish with our general blanket statement.

Best Regards,

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