

WOOSEHILL MEDICAL CENTRE

REPORT ON SURVEY ON NEW APPOINTMENT SYSTEM

The survey had **316** responses.

Background

A new appointment system was introduced on 22 February 2016 to address high patient demand which, in the Surgery's view, was putting at risk the safe delivery of primary care services.

Changes to the appointment system were communicated to the approx 590 members of the Patient Reference Group (PRG) by email or post. A notice was posted on the front page of the Surgery website. The Surgery information screen carried details of the reasons for the changes and what these changes entailed. Information about the changes and the reasons for them was put on the Patient Participation Group (PPG) noticeboard. Reception staff were briefed on how to communicate these changes to patients coming into Reception and/or phoning in to make appointments.

It was always the intention to survey patients once the system had been in place for a little while. Aside from some teething problems in the first couple of weeks, the Surgery believes that the system has bedded in well, with patients understanding why it was necessary to make the changes.

A survey of patients on whether the new appointment system was working for them was conducted between 5 and 29 July.

The 590 members of the PRG were emailed or posted the survey. A link was put on the Surgery website. Patients coming into the Surgery were encouraged to complete a survey form.

Results of survey

The response has been encouraging:

Total respondents: 316
PRG members (including postal)/Direct to website: 245
Surgery: 71

Over 80% of respondents knew the new system had been introduced, which is encouraging, but only 62% understood why. This could be because detailed information on why the appointment system had changed went directly only to PRG members, with other patients finding out for themselves that the system had changed and maybe not asking why.

One of the aims of the new system was to ease difficulties in making appointments. The survey highlights that over half of respondents still find it difficult to make either an on-the-day appointment or a pre-bookable appointment. However, those that do get a pre-bookable appointment appear to be satisfied with the appointment given.

The amount of online appointment booking is low. It is unclear whether that is because of low take up, or that not so many appointments are available and they go very quickly.

About 53% of total respondents answered the question "How do you rate the new system?" and 61% of those rated the new system as OK, but note should be taken that over twice as many respondents rated it "not at all" compared with "great". Response to the sit-and-wait element of the new system was mixed with around 52% satisfied they got to see a doctor on the day, while around 31% had to wait over 30 minutes to be seen. More reaction to the sit-and-wait element can be found in the comments.

As suspected, awareness of opening hours outside the core Monday-Friday 0800-1830 was low.

Some 45% of respondents made use of the the Comment/Suggestion box, with many expressing understanding and support for the new system but highlighting the difficulties of getting through to the surgery on the phone at around 0800 every day and then finding there were no appointments available

and having to start the process again the following day. A significant number of comments highlighted problems with the sit-and-wait system and there were a few suggestions on how to improve it.

However, it is encouraging that respondents did come up with a range of suggestions to improve access and used the opportunity the survey afforded them to thank and compliment staff.

Conclusions drawn from survey, including from comments section

- It is encouraging that the survey had a good take-up
- Targeting patients directly with information works
- It is encouraging that patients knew about the system, but less encouraging that they did not understand the reasons for it
- The new system is not easier than the old one for on-the-day appointments
- The new system is not easier than the old one for pre-bookable appointments
- There are problems phoning at 0800 to get an appointment
- The sit-and-wait system could be revised
- Online appointment booking numbers are low
- Low awareness of service availability (Saturday mornings, telephone consultations early morning & evening) outside core opening hours
- Positive suggestions offered by patients to improve service

Recommendations for action by the Surgery

- Increase/improve direct communication (beyond the PRG) to the wider patient body to inform them of current services available and any changes to services, by all communication means possible including wider use of text messaging and email. This should in time increase the number of participants in surveys and, more importantly, raise patient awareness
- Set target for increasing online access
- Actively seek to increase number of appointments available online (this should lead to greater online take-up)
- Demonstrate that Doctor/patient ratio at Woosehill is acceptable
- Take up positive suggestions from survey on tweaking the sit-and-wait system
- Set up FAQs page on website based on answers given to patient comments in survey

Patient Participation Group
Woosehill Medical Centre
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