

The Patient Participation Group is a group of patients who provide a voice for the practice population. The group meets routinely to enable the practice to discuss matters around the practice and to seek their opinions on surgery issues.

The Group has been in place now for around 3 years and has resulted in improvements to in the service that APEX Medical Practice provides, and the patient environment. This has included overhauling the condition of the waiting room, and corridor areas, and improving the advertising of the extended hours.

The Patient Participation Group can be joined by any member of the patient population and the Practice and keen for new members. Signage is in place in the corridor advertising the group and patients are encouraged to discuss how to do so with the Practice Manager.

The Group were contacted to discuss whether it was sensible to rerun the annual survey that has been in place for several years. In the past this provided a good source of feedback from patients, about the overall quality of the service that is being provided to them. It looks at areas of access to the building, parking, access to the GPs, the quality of the reception staff, access to the practice by telephone, and overall satisfaction of the care that is received.

The Group agreed that it was a good idea, and that they were happy to use the same questionnaire as in previous years, which has proved to be a useful tool in the past. In addition to this questionnaire, the Practice has implemented the Department of Health's Friends and Family Test, and this in conjunction with the patient survey would give a good overall view of the quality of the services to patients.

60 questionnaires were produced.

In general, how helpful do you find the receptionists at our practice?

Just over 90% of the respondents found the receptionists "Very Helpful" or "Helpful".

How easy do you find it to get into the building?

Over 90% of respondents found access into the building "Easy" or "Very Easy". 10% found access "Fairly Easy".

How easy do you find it to travel to and/or park at the surgery?

Surprisingly, the respondents have found difficulty in parking at the surgery. 25% of respondents found it "Not Very Easy" to travel to and/or park at the surgery. Around 65% felt it was "Fairly Easy", "Easy" or "Very Easy". The practice is aware of some difficulties in parking at the time that the neighbouring school finishes for the day, and the car park is often mis-used by parents collecting their children. For a quarter of respondents to raise this concern, this clearly is more of a problem than we felt.

How satisfied are you with surgery opening hours?

Nearly 77% of respondents felt "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" with the surgery opening hours. Just a single patient was "Very dissatisfied" with the opening hours.

How easy do you find it to get through to the surgery on the phone?

Nearly a third of respondents have found it “Very difficult” to get through to the surgery on the phone. Approximately 14% found access “Very easy” or “Easy”, and around 30% found it “Neither easy or difficult”. 27.5% found accessing the surgery by phone “Difficult”.

The Practice definitely needs to address this issue, as over 50% of respondents found it either “Difficult” or “Very Difficult” to access the surgery by phone. Is it not clear, however, whether this is only accessing appointments, enquiries, or both, and the surgery suggest that this is investigated further.

How easy do you find it to get an appointment with a GP at the practice?

Over 60% of respondents found it “Fairly Easy”, “Easy” or “Very Easy” to get an appointment with a GP at the Practice. Only 14% found it “Not at all easy”.

How easy do you find it to get an appointment with a nurse at the practice?

Nearly 80% of the respondents found it “Fairly easy”, “Easy”, and “Very Easy” to get an appointment with the Nurse. 7 patients found it “Not very easy” to get an appointment.

In general, how satisfied are you with the care you get at your GP surgery or health centre?

Nearly 85% of respondents agreed that they were “Very Satisfied” or “Fairly Satisfied” with the Practice. 6 patients were “Neither Satisfied nor dissatisfied”.

What do you think about the standard of information with which you are provided?

A little under 80% of the respondents found that the information that was provided to them was “up to date and informative”. Nearly 12%, however, felt that the “information provided needs to be improved”. 3 patients felt that there “is not enough information available”.

The last time you saw a GP or practice nurse; do you feel they involved you in decisions about your care?

Around 75% of our respondents felt that they were involved in their decisions about their care. Nearly 18% felt that they were listened to, but they were not involved. Three patients felt that they were not involved.

The survey highlighted areas where we are performing well, and areas that should be improved.

Key areas to positive responses to note were that the vast majority of people are very happy with the reception team, and the level of care that they provide; that overall, nearly 85% of patients were fairly or very satisfied with the care that they received from the surgery; nearly 75% of the patients were satisfied or very satisfied with the surgery opening hours.

There were some clear areas for improvement highlighted however. With a quarter of patients finding it difficult to get through to the surgery by telephone, this needs investigating further and addressing. Similarly there is a difficulty with patients being able to get an appointment with a GP at the surgery. The Practice, has coincidentally noticed an increase demand for appointments at the surgery, the exact cause has not yet been determined; however winter does often bring with it coughs and colds and an increase in requests for medications and doctors attention.

Most surprising was the difficulty that patients had in parking at the surgery, with a quarter of patients finding it “Not very easy” to travel or park.

From these key areas, suggestions were made to improve within these areas:

- Accessibility by telephone
- GP appointments
- Parking

Accessibility by telephone and GP appointments

The Practice feels that further investigation is required to determine the exact problems that patients are having with the accessibility by telephone and whether the problem is just for appointments, enquiries or both. However, because patients are also having difficulty with GP appointments the Practice does feel that these two issues are entwined.

The Practice has noticed an increase in demand for GP appointments and this in turn will impact upon the accessibility for those phoning the practice (higher demand means an increase number of callers to the practice). The practice has two appointment lines, and if two patients are calling the practice, then any more patients telephoning will be unable to access the practice until a call is terminated. The Practice has considered increasing the phone lines into the practice but ruled this out, as it would necessitate an increase the reception staff to handle and process the calls.

The present appointment system also can impact on patients accessing the surgery. The practice books "on the day" morning appointments from 8.30am and afternoon "on the day" appointments from 2pm. Pre-bookable appointments can be booked anytime and up to a week in advance. The "on the day" appointments do, on occasions, cause a rush and scramble at 8am and 2pm respectively, because demand is high.

The appointment system is to be overhauled, as it is creating problems. A meeting will be arranged with all staff for suggestions and changes before a new system is implemented. Considerations will be made for booking afternoon appointments in the morning; next day booking; booking over a week in advance; maintaining some same day appointments and others. The practice does have to be careful though that increasing the number of advance appointments is likely to increase the number of patients who fail to attend; this has always happened historically and is the main reason why one pre-bookable appointment were restricted to one week ahead. A new appointment system will be devised.

During April 2015 the Practice will implement its new appointment system.

In addition, the Practice has been involved with an on-going dialogue with the clinical system supplier following the results of last year's questionnaire and Patient Participation Group discussion. At that time it was realised that patients would like to be able to book their appointments online. Ensuring patient confidentiality was always a concern with the Practice; however it is clear that this issue has been resolved. The Practice is in the process of completing its training for this and also the electronic prescription service and these will be introduced also in April. It is hoped that the patients will benefit from these new services, and that being able to book appointments online will improve the patient experience, removing the need to call the Practice to book an appointment.

Car Parking

The Practice will liaise with the landlord of the building, and also the neighbouring school to try and attempt to address the issue around the car park. It is clear from talking with patients that difficulty is had specifically in the morning, when children are dropped off, and in the afternoon when they are collected. Observation has been made to the car park problem and it is clear that during these

times there are an increase number of vehicles in the car park, and these are not parked in spaces but in front of, to the sides and wherever people can leave their cars!

It is of concern to the Practice for a number of reasons: It creates difficulty for patients to get into the practice on time for their appointments; it impacts on patient's stress levels ahead of their appointment potentially increasing their frustration levels with the practice staff that they encounter; there is a significant risk that an Ambulance coming to the surgery would also be affected, potentially affecting a human life.

The Practice will place in writing to the landlord, neighbouring practice and neighbouring school asking for their input in resolving this issue.

These three areas will be addressed in the forthcoming months with a view to improve the services that we offer to our patient population, and it is hoped that this will be the case with future surveys reflecting this.