



**Enter & View
Quarry Bank Medical Centre
February 2024**

healthwatch
Dudley



Background

Healthwatch Dudley listen to people's views and experiences of all types of health and care settings.

The national NHS England GP Patient Survey (2023) highlighted the difficulties some patients were encountering when trying to get an appointment at their surgery. Following local engagement with people living in the Dudley borough, we decided to conduct a wider piece of research.

All Healthwatch have powers of Enter & View, which allows conversations to take place with people in health and care settings.

Quarry Bank Medical Centre was randomly selected to be part of an Enter & View visit.

This report provides a snapshot of the conversations around access to appointments at Quarry Bank Medical Centre. The findings from this Enter & View report will inform a borough-wide report about access to GP services.

The visit

Two members of Healthwatch Dudley staff and a volunteer visited the surgery between 2.00 pm and 4.00 pm on Thursday, 1 February 2024.

Quarry Bank Medical Centre has one waiting room where patients wait to see any of the health professionals.

Patients were invited to speak to a member of Healthwatch Dudley to share their experience of booking their appointment. As part of our conversations, we asked which method was used to make the appointment and enquired about the level of knowledge around the other health professionals they could be seen by at the surgery.

Patients were also asked if there was anything else they would like to add about the surgery whilst speaking to us.

In total, we spoke to five patients during our visit.

Conversations

We spoke to four patients waiting to see the practice nurse and one who was waiting for her husband who was with the GP.

We were informed that the GP was not running a clinic whilst we were there as they make telephone calls to patients and home visits during the afternoon. We were not made aware of this prior to the visit.



Getting through on the telephone

Patients reported that they generally did not have a problem getting through by telephone and only had to wait a short time in a queue.

One patient said they thought they were not allowed to ring the surgery to request an appointment and said when they tried to do so, they were told to complete an online form.

"I got through straight away but at times it has been a nightmare."

"If I need an appointment for a child, I ring up. I need to have the reassurance that someone is listening."

"The appointments have often gone when I call."

"They had a new phone system recently which tells you the number you are in the queue. If I couldn't get through, I would go to the surgery."

"I book either online or by phone. I wait no longer than two or three minutes on the phone."

"The receptionist today told me there were no appointments, so I asked the doctor to ring me. He later rang me and then asked the receptionist to make me an appointment."

"When I ring for an appointment, I usually don't wait long."

Online services

Two patients told us that they had used the online form on the practice website to book their appointment.

One of the patients said they found it difficult to use online services and said they would prefer to speak to a member of the staff at the surgery.

*"I submitted a form two days ago, you tell them what's wrong and they come back with a response.
I'd rather ring and speak to a person but I can't do it.
We're supposed to do everything online. I tried to order a repeat prescription online but got stuck and it didn't get through."*

"I requested an appointment online for myself via the surgery website but you can only do this during surgery hours. Sometimes you don't get an answer for a few days though."

"I don't use the internet for appointments but I order prescriptions online. "



Extended healthcare team

Four patients we spoke to were waiting to see a nurse, one patient was accompanying someone who was with a GP as we arrived.

From the small number of patients we spoke to, there was a varying awareness about the health professionals they could see at the surgery.

“I’m happy to see a health care assistant and not a GP depending on my concerns.”

“I am aware you can see a nurse or a doctor. Some receptionists ask why you want to see a doctor, some don’t.”

“I don’t know about other health professionals at surgery other than nurses.”



Our observations

Due to unexpected staff absence at the surgery when planning our Enter & View visit, we had been unable to establish the best times to speak to more patients.

At the time of our visit, therefore, the waiting room was not very busy, so it was difficult to obtain a wider range of views from patients.

At the surgery, it was noted that whilst there was a lot of useful information displayed on the notice boards, some of this was out-of-date.

At the end of our visit, the Practice Manager was able to provide us with information regarding clinic times and we were invited to return at a later date.



Considerations



Booking appointments

There appeared to be some uncertainty about whether or not appointments can be made by telephone. It would be helpful to clarify this to patients.



Online access

Some issues were reported when trying to use online services. Guidance around the use of technology to make appointments and order repeat prescriptions may be helpful for patients.



Other healthcare professionals

It may be useful for patients to be provided with information about other health professionals at the surgery which could potentially increase availability of GP appointments.



Notice boards

There was some useful information on the notice boards, however, we noted some posters about events which had already taken place.

The surgery may wish to check the notice board on a regular basis and keep information relevant.

We would also suggest that details about the various ways patients can contact the surgery could be added to the notice boards.



Response from Quarry Bank Medical Centre

Thank you again for your support and feedback, with this we can also make changes to help improve our services to our patients.

- Practice Manager

Response to considerations



Booking appointments

Quarry Bank Medical Centre said the process for all patients is the same whether they call, visit the practice or use the website to book an appointment. The surgery's navigator team ensures patients are assessed and directed to the most appropriate appointment or service.



Online access

Quarry Bank Medical Centre are currently working with their Patient Participation Group (PPG) to look at offering digital education to help people to book online appointments, access to services and order medication.



Other healthcare professionals

Quarry Bank Medical Centre have updated their website and have displayed new posters in the waiting room. They are currently working with their PPG to improve awareness around other professionals that are linked to the surgery.



Notice boards

Quarry Bank Medical Centre have tasked one of the admin team to ensure notice boards are up to date.



Thank you

A bouquet of vibrant pink chrysanthemum flowers is positioned behind the 'Thank you' text, adding a warm and appreciative touch to the header.

We were pleased to listen to patients at Quarry Bank Medical Centre, who were happy to share their views.

We hope that the experiences of patients and the points we have raised for consideration can be used to improve services.

Healthwatch Dudley will be collating the feedback received from all GP Enter & View visits, survey responses and discussions with patient groups to explore access experiences to GP surgery services across the Dudley borough.

References

NHS England (2023) GP Patient Survey Available at <https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/surveysandreports> [Accessed February 16 2024]



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