

What we're hearing about Glenlyn Medical Centre

March 2024



"The appointment I was given was at Giggs Hill in Thames Ditton. Which I had to walk to and from, which is a 5 mile round trip. Not on a bus route and couldn't afford the bus anyway."



If you would like a paper copy of this document or require it in an alternative format, please get in touch with us.

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Report overview

In February 2024, we spoke to patients at Glenlyn Medical Centre about their experiences of being a patient there. We asked open questions, allowing patients and staff to share their experiences.

We also distributed a paper and online survey to local residents asking about local pharmacy and GP practices. For the purpose of this report, we have focused on responses provided by people who said they were registered as patients at Glenlyn Medical Centre and Giggs Hill Surgery. The survey included questions about preferred methods of communication with the practice, what worked well and what could have improved their most recent experience of the practice.

People have also shared their recent experiences through our Helpdesk, online Feedback Centre and via Healthwatch England.

This report, based on all of the experiences shared through the channels outlined above, highlights the most common themes that we heard from patients and includes quotes to provide context on these themes. Whilst this report accurately reflects what we heard from people who engaged with us, we are aware that it may not be representative of everyone's views of the service. In particular, we heard more from older people and less from younger age groups, particularly those under 25.

Any urgent or concerning experiences within this report have been escalated to the appropriate teams. All appropriate information and advice and signposting to complaints processes has already been given.

If you would like more information or examples of what people have shared, please get in touch.

Executive summary

Many patients shared experiences of what is working well, including feeling well supported by staff and, in particular, nursing staff. For others, however, being seen by someone other than a GP feels unsatisfactory and does not meet their needs. Building people's and patients' understanding and confidence in other professionals is an area which needs further

development. At the same time, demonstrating to patients that they are being listened to, and acknowledging their preferences, will also support improvements to the service for both patients and staff.

For some, booking appointments was easy and efficient. However, it was clear that many are finding it particularly difficult to navigate the website and online forms and many have experienced significant problems with the centre's phones.

Operating across 2 sites creates problems for some patients who do not find it easy getting to appointments. Whilst this is related to a lack of access to public transport, being clear about appointment availability and offering a choice where possible would be an improvement for some.

Communicating more effectively with patients would address many of the frustrations currently being expressed. An effective Patient Participation Group (PPG) is one way to achieve this. Another way is developing a transparent listening culture within the centre, to demonstrate ongoing work aimed at improving patient experience, as well as allowing patients to share suggestions of what changes are needed alongside what is working well.

Whilst we haven't included specific examples within this report, we did receive comments about the building and facilities and how the environment could be made more welcoming to improve patient experience.

Recommendations

Many of our recommendations revolve around working more effectively with patients, families and carers. Many of the changes that have come in over recent years require careful communication, to ensure people understand the rationale behind changes; are not facing unintended consequences in terms of access; and are still able to access person-centred care. In our 2021 report on access to primary care, [Review of remote consultation experiences and the drivers of frustration in GP access](#) we urged better communication in the following areas - all still relevant to the recommendations below:

- the benefits of triage.
- how decisions about methods of consultation are reached by the practice.
- the importance and benefits of multi-disciplinary team working.
- when to seek help and support elsewhere in the system.

Professionals in primary care have been living the changes on a daily basis, however, many patients will access their GP practice infrequently, so it will take time and repeated engagement, targeted at different cohorts, based on robust understanding of attitudes and needs (ideally using some element of co-design), and using multiple communication channels, to ensure patients are fully on board with change. We have seen some practices across Surrey communicating with patients in a variety of ways, through Patient Participation Groups, coffee mornings, focus groups, and creative use of social media. This sort of proactive approach is needed, building on the good practice examples.

Glenlyn Medical Centre

1. We recommend more work with patients to improve trust and confidence in clinical decision making and to build understanding that being treated by the most appropriate professional ensures everyone gets the right support from the right person or service.
2. We recommend working with patients to help them better navigate the various options for accessing care, and working towards a consistent and clear approach for having the online forms available.
3. We recommend that improvements to telephone systems are considered, including how the call back facility is implemented.
4. Where possible, patients should be offered a choice of which site to attend. Where this is not possible, we recommend that the practice clearly communicates the reasons to patients and ensures that patients are made aware of any local support available for volunteer patient transport.
5. A recommend a range of ways to communicate with patients should be utilised according to individual preferences. We have heard from some patients of other practices that they do not like to receive text

messages when they have not explicitly given permission, so we would recommend explicitly seeking consent.

6. We recommend that the Patient Participation Group is re-established and fully supported in order to forge better links to communicate with patients and encourage more involvement and feedback directly from patients.

NHS Surrey Heartlands

1. We recommend more work with patients to improve trust and confidence in clinical decision making and to build understanding that being treated by the most appropriate professional ensures everyone gets the right support from the right person or service.
2. We recommend considering this feedback as part of improvements to websites going forward.
3. We recommend increased promotion of the NHS App to build confidence in patients and make it easier for them to access care.

Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who gave their time and shared their experiences with us.

We would also like to thank the staff at Glenlyn Medical Centre for supporting our engagement session and for their interest in our findings.

What we're hearing

Some people want more face to face appointments

We asked: Thinking about your most recent experience with the GP practice, what worked well? What could have improved your experience and/or created a better outcome for you? 27 out of 87 people who answered that question told us that "seeing a doctor face to face" would have improved their experience:

"I think it is particularly important to be able to see a doctor face to face when appropriate. For me, I am a cancer patient and I have a different phone number to call via a palliative care nurse. I had 2 consultations recently with a Doctor at Glenlyn [February 2024], these were both via a phone call. These were because I rang the palliative care nurse [Princess Alice Palliative Care Nurse] due to being in immense pain. She arranged the first GP appointment for me. After the first appointment, the GP I spoke to increased my medication, that has had a knock on effect to my other medication and I'm still in pain. I asked if I could be seen face to face but another appointment was made via telephone. When I spoke at the next appointment and asked why could we not have this appointment face to face so you can examine me, the doctor said I know what the problem is and so I don't need a face to face appointment. I couldn't tell you who the GP was, I didn't catch their name and I find because I no longer sleep well and I'm on a lot of medication it is very hard to concentrate over the phone vs in person, so many things I can't remember after coming off the phone...

210896

Recommendation to Glenlyn Medical Practice:

We recommend working with patients to better understand their reasons behind wanting to specifically have a face to face appointment with a GP.

Building relationships and patient understanding of the multi-disciplinary team

When asked what's working well, there were many examples of positive experiences with staff members. Nurses were mentioned in particular:

"I think the nursing care here is excellent. I have had to have an awful lot of dressings recently and the nurses have helped me and quickly."

210995

"My blood test and the nurse who took the test today were very good.

I would say the care I received for my cancer treatment has been very good, the GP practice was very quick with my referral for further tests..."

210896

"I think they are trying and they do some really good stuff. I was called in - proactively and without any obvious reason - for a heart check. It was out of the blue but it was great as I had 30 minutes with the nurse. And when I had a problem with my ankle I got seen very quickly by a musculoskeletal specialist who was great - very thorough and gave me an special app with exercises to do."

211114

8 people specifically mentioned that they felt seeing a member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team instead of a GP was a lesser substitute and they would feel more confident seeing a GP:

"My last 2 appointments have been with a paramedic and a nurse practitioner respectively. They were very pleasant and seemed fairly confident, but I would like to see an actual doctor when I need one, and a named doctor at that. Touch wood, I don't yet need one very often, but I am in my mid 70s and beginning to feel vulnerable and abandoned."

239558698

“The ANP (Advanced Nurse Practitioner) was very rushed and didn't take time to look at my overall health. I attended for loss of voice but I was also having a fibromyalgia flare and in agony, but she ignored this completely.”

239292061

“I would like to see a doctor but you can never get to see one, it is always a nurse practitioner. But saying that they are very good. But for certain things would be nice to see a doctor.”

239376111

“I haven't been for a while. It is almost impossible to get a GP appointment. The phone lines are extremely busy and it takes time to get a response to the online form. If you do get an appointment it is with a paramedic rather than a GP.”

240469783

Recommendation for Glenlyn Medical Centre and Surrey Heartlands:

There is some negativity towards seeing members of the practice staff who are not GPs. This is something that we also hear in relation to other practices in Surrey. Therefore, we recommend more work with patients to improve trust and confidence in clinical decision making and to build understanding that being treated by the most appropriate professional ensures everyone gets the right support from the right person or service.

Appointment booking

Some reflected that getting an appointment quickly and easily was the thing that worked particularly well in their last interaction with the practice:

“Gave appointment quickly.”

238972643

“Got an appointment same day. Would have preferred to have been seen by a doctor not a nurse. I had to probe and ask for tests etc.”

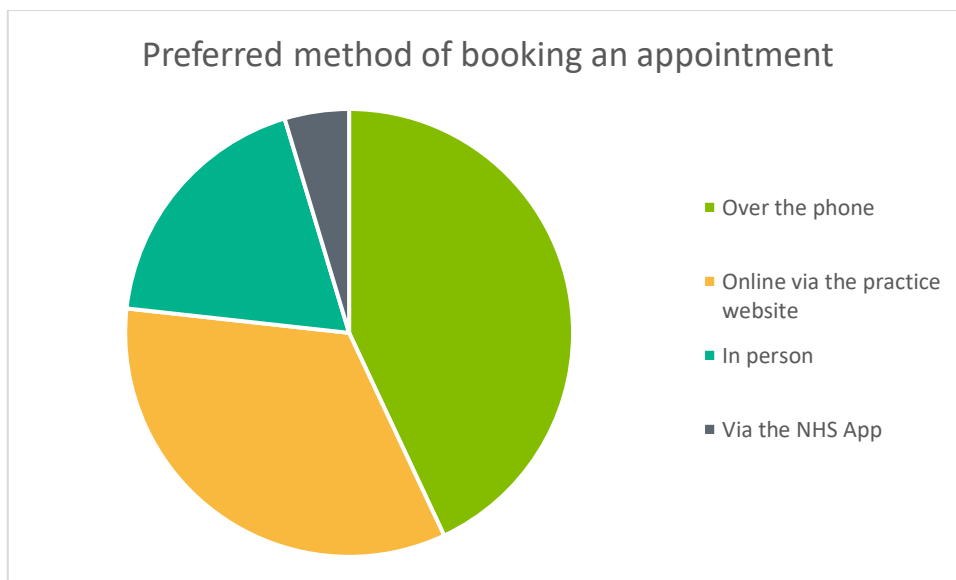
238975084

However, this was not the case for everyone, and there are examples where people found it difficult to have meaningful communication:

“Impossible to phone, no answer, call back doesn’t work, online forms keep changing and no reply- reception turn you away to do it online. No GP appointments, everything triaged via nurses, everything just gets referred out don’t deal with, paperwork results ridiculous delays.”

239492647

We asked people how they would prefer to book appointments with the practice. Over the phone was the most popular, followed by the GP website, in person and finally very few people would like to use the NHS App.



Experiences of using the website

People have also told us that they would like to see further improvements to the website to make it easier to book appointments:

“I have used the Glenlyn website but it could improve. I’d like to be able to click a button that says ‘Book appointment.’ At the moment I go through the enquiry form and I’m never sure I am doing the right thing. But the website is more useful than holding on the phone. It is difficult if they reach

capacity early though, with the baby I am not always able to call first thing.”

210924

“I couldn’t get through – at all! Not on the phone and the website was taken down mid-afternoon due to sheer volume of enquiries. The website is really unclear, if you want to ask a simple admin question it’s really hard, as is navigating to a repeat prescription as the labelling is awful. Once through, it’s fine but getting in touch is almost impossible.”

239221802

“[Being] able to book routine appointments such as smear tests, blood tests etc online would be helpful.”

239264105

Recommendation for Glenlyn Medical Centre:

We recommend working with patients to help them better navigate the various options for accessing care and working towards a consistent and clear approach for having the online forms available.

Recommendation for Surrey Heartlands:

We recommend considering this feedback as part of improvements to websites going forward.

We recommend increased promotion of the NHS App to build confidence in patients and make it easier for them to access care.

Phone lines need to be improved

15 people mentioned issues with phone lines being a barrier to access and that call backs from cloud telephony is not working. Some examples of what people told us are:

“It would help if phones were answered after being in a queue, you seem to get to number one and get cut off. This happens a lot, you also do not always get the call back if you use that option.”

239240299

“Impossible to get through on the phone. There are never any appointments available on Patient Access. Haven’t been able to see a doctor or get an appointment at Glenlyn for over 3 years.”

239492647

“I cannot get to see a GP when I need to, I get cut off whilst I am waiting on the phone.”

211241

Recommendation to Glenlyn Medical Practice:

Patients should have equitable access regardless of how they choose to contact the practice. The preferred method of contact for the majority of people we heard from is via the telephone. Therefore, we recommend that improvements to telephone systems are considered, including how the call back facility is implemented.

Accessibility

Operating across 2 sites is proving to be problematic for some as they are finding it difficult to get to where they’re given an appointment. We have heard about this from people who are likely to need appointments on a fairly regular basis – parents of young children and people with long term conditions requiring monitoring in particular. These people either require additional support or are finding it difficult to find transport:

“I prefer going to the Thames Ditton site rather than here [Glenlyn] as it’s nearer and we only have 1 car. If my husband needs the car for work, then getting to Glenlyn can be an issue. Public transport isn’t great. That said, it seems more inviting and better run at this Glenlyn site. The doctors and nurses are lovely, and it feels nice and less busy.”

210924

“To be here today [for a blood test], I have arranged for a friend to bring me and support me and I have needed to take a lot of medication to be able to come along, if I was to do this I wish I could have had a face to face appointment

with a doctor to discuss the hip pain as I feel like my hip is a separate issue.”

210896

“Would be much better if could still get all our family’s GP appointments at Giggs Hill so we can walk rather than having to [get] over to Glenlyn which is where all the appointments seem to be.”

239388035

“The appointment I was given was at Giggs Hill in Thames Ditton. Which I had to walk to and from, which is a 5 mile round trip. Not on a bus route and couldn't afford the bus anyway.”

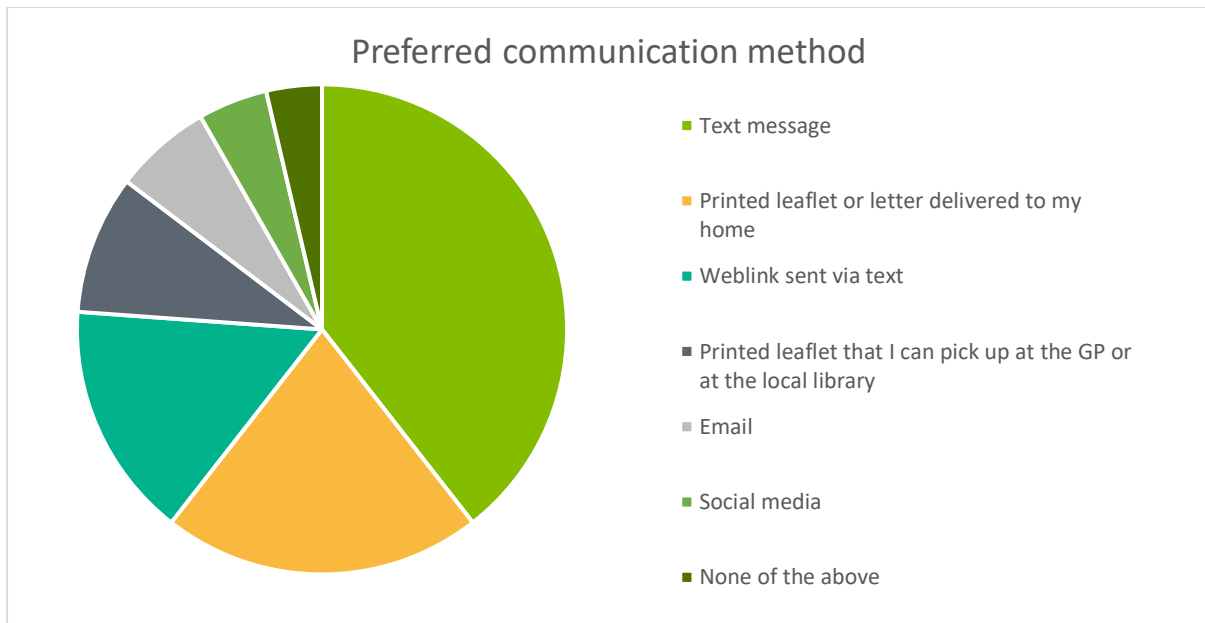
239491383

Recommendation for Glenlyn Medical Practice:

Where possible, patients should be offered a choice of which site to attend. Where this is not possible, it would be helpful to clearly communicate the reasons to patients and ensure that patients are made aware of any local support available for volunteer patient transport.

Communication to patients

Communicating better with patients is key to ensuring patients and families understand the changes that are going on at GP practices. We asked how people would like to receive information from the practice not directly related to their clinical care. People were able to select more than one option. Text message was the most popular, followed by printed leaflet or letter delivered to home and a weblink sent via text. A printed leaflet in community settings such as the library and GP practice and email were more popular than social media.



We also heard examples from patients of where they felt communication had not worked well for them:

“As a patient at Glenlyn, I felt they dealt with my diagnosis well, but improvements could be made around communication and the way things are communicated. The secretaries do try to help but I feel like the practice needs to be proactive and take action more. As a cancer patient, I don't feel important to the practice and I would like to feel more supported, it's all in the way you are spoken to and communicated with, some understanding that it's very hard for me to concentrate.”

210896

“I had booked in for a cervical smear. But have now found out that I can't have one until 12 weeks post birth. It's not been easy to change. There was a hyperlink attached to the email and I then had to redo the whole form again, and the appointment has been made at Glenlyn now rather than in Thames Ditton... I received today's appointment [for postnatal checks] through the post and got a text reminder. The text reminder said a different time to the letter. But there wasn't much difference so I just turned up at the earlier time. I like getting the texts...”

Mixed experiences of booking follow up appointments

Booking regular or follow up appointments is working efficiently for some:

“The appointment today has been booked automatically for me and I will get my next appointment before I leave. I come every 12 weeks, though if my readings are off then they’ll book me in sooner. It has been weekly before. I find this process very efficient.”

210926

People have shared examples of how messaging about how to follow up can be contradictory which leads to frustrations:

“I even had a receptionist refuse to give my GP a message concerning some test results they needed to be aware of so they could take action, even though my GP had asked me to ask reception to forward my message onto them. I found myself very shaken by this interaction and dreading my next one.”

239356965

“I am on statins and the correct procedure would be for a GP to review my record and contact me to say I needed a blood test. Instead I found I had to make an appointment for a blood test and then a GP would decide if it was necessary. This is ridiculous.”

239224020

“Was sent a link to book an appointment only to open the link to a message saying there were no appointments... complete waste of my time.”

239289480

[Submitted urine samples] “A week later they texted ‘your daughter’s results confirmed infection, make an appointment to see a doctor she may need antibiotics.’ I filled in an online form, heard nothing for few hours, then rang them to request the appointment and they said it is still

under the triage to check if she needs an appointment. By then, my daughter was screaming in agony.”

210993

Recommendation to Glenlyn Medical Centre:

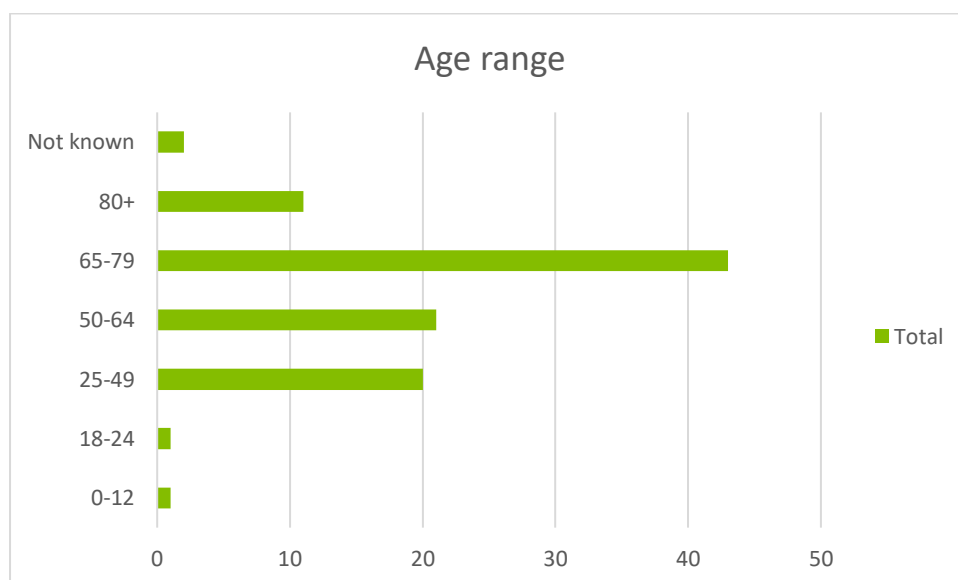
A range of ways to communicate with patients should be utilised according to individual preferences. We have heard from some patients of other practices that they do not like to receive text messages when they have not explicitly given permission, so we would recommend explicitly seeking consent.

We also recommend that the Patient Participation Group is re-established and fully supported in order to forge better links to communicate with patients and encourage more involvement and feedback directly from patients.

Who we heard from

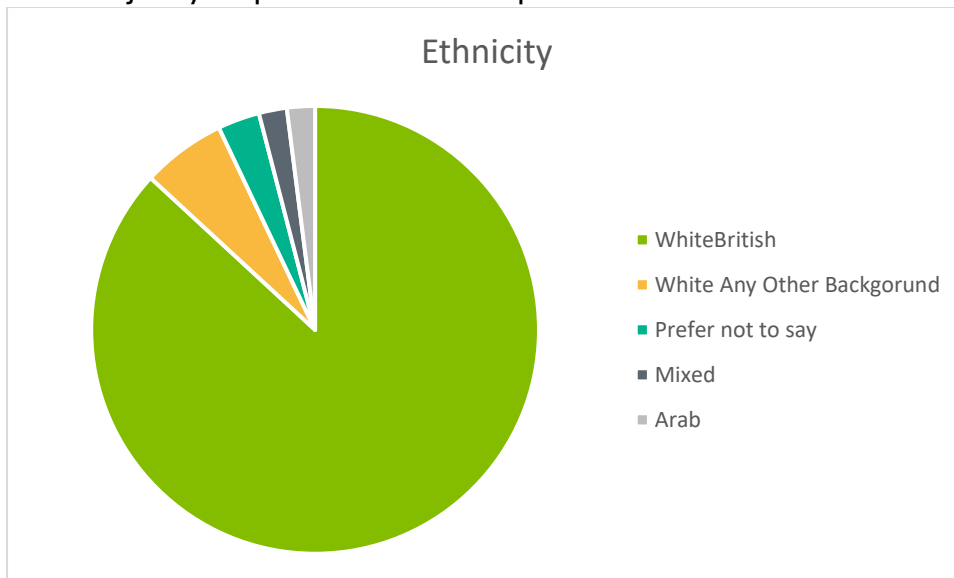
Between 1 January 2024 and 19 March, 99 people have shared their experience of being a patient at Glenlyn Medical Centre. 86 of these people responded directly to our survey.

We heard from patients who spanned most age groups, however, most were 65-79 years old and very few were under 24 years old.



73 patients identified as female, 24 identified as male and 2 didn't answer.

The majority of patients who responded were White British.



14% of patients considered themselves to have a disability.

49% of patients considered themselves to have a long term condition.

20% of patients considered themselves to be a carer.

About Healthwatch Surrey

Healthwatch Surrey champions the voice of local people to shape, improve and get the best from NHS, health and social care services. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure decision makers listen to the experiences of local people.

We passionately believe that listening and responding to local people's experiences is vital to create health and social care services that meet the needs of people in Surrey. We seek out people's experiences of health and care services, particularly from people whose voices are seldom heard, who might be at more risk of health inequalities and whose needs are not met by current services. We share our findings publicly and with service providers and commissioners to influence and challenge current provision and future plans.

We also provide reliable and trustworthy information and signposting about local health and social care services to help people get the support they need.

Contact us

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 [Healthwatch Surrey](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Healthwatch Surrey)



We are proud to be commended in the National Healthwatch Impact Awards, recognising our work helping to improve local NHS and social care. You can view [our video](#) highlighting how feedback from local people has been used to make positive changes to health and social care support.



We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an audit so that we can be certain of this.

Luminus

The Healthwatch Surrey service is run by Luminus Insight CIC, known as Luminus.

Registered office: GF21, Astolat, Coniers Way, Burpham, Surrey, GU4 7HL.

Appendix A

Case study

The conversation that we had with this person is a good summary of many of the key themes that people have highlighted. From positives about staff and clinical care, to areas of improvement for communication to patients and a need for further clarity.

“I’m here today as a follow up. I was asked to arrange a blood test here at the surgery and then they followed up by text to ask me to arrange a blood pressure check and to wear a blood pressure monitor which is why I’m here today. The text messaging works well for me for follow ups however I would prefer to speak to someone when booking an appointment. I find it easier to speak to someone but I have found it challenging here to be able to have a simple conversation in the past and in my case I needed quite a bit of help after my husband was discharged from hospital. He had a cardiac arrest and had an emergency operation at the end of August. He was discharged and I was given all the discharge notes with strict instructions to follow up on his behalf around organising tests for his kidneys, blood tests and help from the district nurses. I didn’t know where to start but the Hospital had suggested to go via the GP practice to be referred to the right people. So I came straight in after his discharge as early in the day as possible prepared with all the notes and information given to me. My husband was desperately ill at the time and I’d hoped they would be able to help me either on the desk or by making an appointment for me to follow up with a clinician especially regarding the kidney failure. I found the process really hard, the person on the desk had to keep disappearing to ask questions and I just wanted to speak to whoever they were speaking to, just to be reassured that things were happening. It was like I was encountering a barrier to being able to progress my husbands care, I didn’t feel confident that things would happen, at one point someone came looking for a pen and a piece of paper – they didn’t even have a piece of paper

behind the desk and I had to give them some from my notebook, things like that make you feel like they are not organised. When I left I felt really worried, like there was no guarantee that anything would actually be happening or any reassurance that it would be treated urgently. I started following up over the next week but didn't feel like I was getting anywhere, it was only after a chance encounter at the flu clinic 5 days later with my husbands warfarin nurse that things turned around and I felt that something started happening.

I think the nursing staff here are excellent and that she went above and beyond. She got me to come to her office and we went through everything and she took time to go through each thing, this was the right kind of communication, where you feel like your concerns are being taken forward. After she took an interest things started happening really quickly for my husband and he started to get all the appointments he needed for follow up.

Today the nurse I saw went above and beyond again, she was proactive so now I don't need to book another appointment and come back again. On the one hand I dread coming here, I have had the sense that they don't really care about the patients and I don't have confidence that things will happen unless you push for yourself. On the other hand when I have had actual treatment here with the nursing staff I have felt the care has been excellent. I'm hoping things will improve more on the GP side too, more consistency. Very recently both my husband and I have seen younger doctors and we felt that they were both very thorough. I had a Doctor call me about my care and again that was excellent, very thorough - perhaps a check list? My husband was able to see a Doctor face to face at Giggs Hill and she spent time with him and went thoroughly through everything which covered all the questions we would have normally needed to ask. I was told someone would contact him the next day but that was actually a few days later and

so communication is key, it's managing expectations and saying someone will be in touch over the next few days. The communication around monitoring could be improved, messaging and follow ups are important to patients. I have filled out the friends and family test feeding back about the good care. I use the NHS App for prescriptions, I need to have a look at all my medication it's a total muddle now. I haven't really used the website." [Signposting: Looked at the website and ran through the booking process and also the admin query function. Discussed what her thoughts were around her husband's care and she explained that his prognosis was not good. We chatted about whether she felt she had shifted into care responsibilities which she felt she had. Wrote down the next Action for Carers drop in session in Hersham and she thought she would go along. Also enquired at the desk on her behalf about medication reviews and the clinical pharmacy team - they explained the process that she needed to send in a request and that the team would get back to her about making an appointment, passed on this and she said she would follow up to try and prompt a medication review.]

210898