

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Slough Wellbeing Board **DATE:** 11 November 2015

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PART I **FOR CONSIDERATION**

HEALTHWATCH SLOUGH'S RESEARCH ON ACCESS TO EXTENDED HOURS PRIMARY CARE APPOINTMENTS

1. Purpose of Report

- To inform the Wellbeing Board of Healthwatch Slough's investigations into the impact that Prime Minister's Challenge Funding (PMCF) has had on residents being able to access to extended hours primary care appointments.
- Slough's Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG received) £2.95m last year. Healthwatch looked specifically at access to GP appointments due to concern that Walk in Centre attendance figures were not dropping.
- Healthwatch are aware that the CCG recently submitted a report about the PMCF to the Board – this report is intended to complement the information previously presented but from a residents perspective.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Committee is requested to note Healthwatch's main findings from their research summarised in section 6 of this report.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities –

This research supports specific delivery against each of the following Joint Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

Health - Reducing inequalities and improving the health and wellbeing of our residents will help them live more positive, active and resilient lives.

3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

This research supports specific delivery against each of the following Five Year Plan outcomes:

- 6 - More people take responsibility and manage their own health care and support needs.

4. **Other Implications**

- (a) **Financial** There are no financial implications directly resulting from the recommendation of this report.
- (b) **Risk Management** -There are no risk management implications associated with this report.
- (c) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications** - There are no Human Rights Act implications associated with the proposed action.
- (d) **Equalities Impact Assessment** - Not applicable.

5. **Supporting information**

5.1 ***Background***

Healthwatch Slough received a number of comments about people finding it difficult to access GP appointments. In addition, Healthwatch Slough received a greater number of comments about people presenting at Slough Walk-in Centre at Upton Hospital.

These observations prompted us to look in more details at what the 16 Slough GP surgeries that received some of the £2.95 million from the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund (PMCF) had done to improve access to GP services for patients.

Whilst the recent GP Survey¹ shows that 76% of Slough patients surveyed were able to get an appointment to see or speak to someone – an improvement of 3% on the previous year. Of those successful in getting an appointment 55% described their experience of making an appointment as good. 21 % stated their experience as neither good nor poor. This leaves a number of patients (25%) who are having a poor experience of making an appointment.

The plan was that the Slough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) would:

- Increase access to GP services by extending weekday and weekend opening times
- Deliver access to extended hours appointments via four hubs.
- Introduce a range of innovative new projects: This includes introducing a free opt-in text service to promote patient wellbeing and provide reminders about routine health checks to online web appointments.

£1.8m of the £2.95 million potentially equates to 922 additional appointments offered each week (341 on weekdays, 581 during weekends). Over a 12 month period this would total 48,000 additional GP appointments. This funding might also be used to offer longer appointments for patients with complex conditions.

5.2 ***What we did:***

Extended hours GP appointments (evenings and weekends) were made available in all 16 surgeries in Slough in 2014/15 as part of a successful bid for £2.95 million

¹ (Ipsos MORI, July 2015, <https://gp-patient.co.uk/slidepacks/July%202015#S>)

from the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund (PMCF) set up to improve access and innovation in the delivery of GP services.

Due to the number of comments that Healthwatch Slough received about patients finding it difficult to access GP appointments, we decided to investigate how well publicised extended hours appointments were and if patients were able to access these additional appointments.

Healthwatch Slough has carried out a four-pronged review:

1. We reviewed every practice website to see how well the scheme was promoted
2. We phoned every surgery after 6.30pm
3. We visited 11 surgeries to look at how the scheme was advertised
4. We spoke to 65 patients to find out about their knowledge of extended hours.

5.3 What we found:

We found good practice in some surgeries and have awarded them a “star rating”.

Areas that need attention:

One of the core principles that lie at the heart of Healthwatch’s work is that every single person matters and every single person is entitled to the highest quality of care. So, whilst it is good to be able to report good practice, at the same time there is still work to be done to ensure that all patients trying to get a GP appointment have a good experience. Some of the areas that we think need attention are:

1. Information available on **websites** varied greatly between surgeries. In particular it appeared that individual practices had not come together to deliver constant and clear information relating to access to extended hours appointments and planned improvements.
2. It would be good to see all Slough GPs to agree a **standard for telephone messages** for the Slough patients, that includes information on the 5 key areas we have identified (see below).
3. **Appointment-booking facilities and flexibility** vary depending on surgery. Patients at some surgeries (e.g. 242 Wexham Road) can have contact with a GP in the same day (in person or by telephone), and there is no limit on how far ahead they can book appointments. Patients at other surgeries have a longer wait for appointments and/or must comply with specific time limits (e.g. Crosby House - 1 week window). Some surgeries offer their patients the facility to book appointments online but others do not. We encourage all GP practices in Slough to work together to develop a consistent approach to appointment booking and online facilities.

Other recommendations include:

Surgery websites - we believe that an excellent GP surgery should include all of the following:-

1. General information about the surgery
2. Extended hours appointments
3. Innovative projects through the extended appointments
4. Emergency/A&E or 999

5. NHS 111
6. Patient Access/Patient online
7. Booking appointments online service
8. Cancelling appointments online service
9. Inviting feedback/comments
10. Complaints process information
11. Healthwatch Slough details

Surgery answer machine messages - We recommend that an information answer machine should provide:

- 1 – Surgery opening times
- 2 – Information on contacting the 111 Service
- 3 – Information on contacting the 999 service in life threatening emergencies
- 4 – GP extended hours information
- 5 - Ways to book and access extended hours appointments

Patient Information and feedback - We would like to see:

- More information screens being available with updated information (as observed in The Avenue & Langley Health Centre surgeries).
- Information available on Choose well, Health, Social Care & Community activities and resources.
- All surgeries to actively promote patient feed-back channels, displaying what patients have fed back and what they have done in response.

Extended hours appointments - We recommend that:

- All Slough surgeries provide their patients with clear information on how you book evening and week-end appointments.
- Details of extended hours to be displayed prominently in all Slough surgeries
- The details of surgery Hubs be shared in all surgeries including photos and local maps, showing how to get to there.
- All surgeries to consider providing patients with extended hours details (e.g. Phone number, locations etc.) in a business card format for convenient reference.

Booking appointments - We recommend:

- Surgery Specific information about Patient Access to support booking and cancelling appointments online.
- Surgeries across Slough review their advance booking arrangements to ensure they meet the patients' needs and are comparable with other surgeries; with a view to providing a more consistent standard of service across Slough.

Environment and display - We recommend that

- Surgeries have sound available to create background noise. This can be achieved via monitor screens and/or music in waiting or booking areas.
- We also recommend that practice staff look at other surgeries information displays (e.g. by visiting other surgeries) and implement the ideas in their own surgery environment.

6. Comments of Other Committees

Our report will be shared with council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2016.

7. **Conclusion**

- We found that the 16 surgeries in Slough operate as individual businesses and have differing processes. This lack of consistency is confusing for patients and means that patients have differing experiences accessing appointments.
- We have made a number of recommendations to all 16 surgeries. We have handed this work over to Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) and would encourage them to take the work forward in their own surgeries.
- We are attending the next Practice Managers Meeting and have put together a business case about how we could support the PPGs that need to develop further.
- We hope that the surgery PPGs will reflect on our findings and take some of our recommendations forward.
- We are also working in partnership with the CCG, Co Commissioning Board, Frimley Trust and BFHT about the use of Upton Walk in Centre and plans to develop Wexham site and the impact this will have on access to primary care.

8. **Appendices**

None

9. **Background Papers**

Briefing 4 - assessing knowledge of access to extended hours appointments

Briefing 3 - looking at the walk-in experience of GP surgeries

Briefing 2 - looking at GP telephone answering

Briefing 1 - looking at GP websites re access to appointments