



**Enter & View
Ridgeway Surgery
February 2024**

healthwatch
Dudley

Background

Healthwatch Dudley listen to people's views and experiences of access to 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.

Ridgeway Surgery invited Healthwatch Dudley to visit following a general invitation to all GP surgeries in the Dudley Borough to take part in a series of Enter & View visits.

This report provides a snapshot of the conversations around access to appointments at Ridgeway Surgery. 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 visited the surgery between 9.30 am and 11.30 am on Thursday, 1 February 2024.

Ridgeway Surgery has two waiting rooms. We spoke to patients waiting to see the practice nurse in one room and the GP in the other.

Patients were invited to speak to a member of Healthwatch Dudley staff 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 29 patients during our visit.

Conversations

We spoke to a range of patients, who had booked appointments by phone and online. Some patients were attending follow-up appointments that had been pre-booked for them.

We observed one patient who came to the surgery and booked their appointment with the receptionist. Other patients told us they were able to go into the surgery to make an appointment.



Getting through on the telephone

Most patients said they did not have to wait very long in the queue when phoning the surgery.

Some patients commented that on occasions, they had to re-dial several times due to the telephone line being engaged.

Patients told us they knew the telephone lines officially open at 8.00 am and it can take a five to ten minute wait to get through when ringing at that time.

The majority of patients appeared to value the fact that they could get through by telephone quite easily and were happy with that method of contact.

“Calling up can be long-winded sometimes, but you get there eventually.”

“When I call, I have to wait a while but I get through.”

“We are very lucky here to get appointments the same day, I am happy with the surgery.”

“I don’t think I have ever called and not got an appointment with someone.”



Online services

Only a few patients told us they had booked their appointment online.

Nearly all of the patients we spoke to said they could get through and book an appointment by telephone, so therefore did not feel the need to explore how to do this online.

"I booked today's visit last Thursday online, you can select which doctor and time you want."

"I know you can book online, I just prefer to do it face to face."

"I make appointments by phone because I am not very technical. I would use online if I had to but it is easier to ring."

"I tried to book online previously, but there were no appointments left. This needs ironing out, as people don't know when the appointments are released."

I go online to look at test results and letters as this is much quicker than waiting for letters to be sent – that is a good service."

"I don't use the online service because my phone is not compatible. I am also reluctant to click on links because of scams."

"I am going to sign up for the online services as I have only just found out about it – I don't think many people know about the website."

"I am not registered to do online booking. I know about Patient Access* but I haven't got a passport and I don't drive, so haven't pursued it."

I suppose if I had to I would do it but as I can get through by phone I don't need to."



Extended healthcare team

All the patients we spoke to were either waiting to see a GP or a nurse.

A few of the patients told us they knew about some of the other health professionals they could see.

Some patients said they had experience of seeing other health professionals and were just happy to be triaged by the receptionist.

“I am aware of other health professionals due to experience seeing them.”

“I am aware there is a doctor and a midwife but as long as the receptionist knows the reason I need an appointment, I am happy to be directed to the right person.”

“It is easy to get an appointment with the nurse, but difficult to see a GP. I feel I should be able to request to see a GP and not see another health professional.

There is no choice as to which GP you see, I want to see the doctor for some reassurance.”

“I have seen information on the surgery website about the staff who work at the practice and have seen the physiotherapist.”

“I don’t know much about other health professionals but have seen the physiotherapist.”



Additional comments

Some patients made additional comments during our conversations.

"I would rather see the same GP as my circumstances are quite complicated and I prefer the continuity, rather than having to explain things every time."

"I have a lot of health issues.....I cannot just discuss one thing, I have many problems and they are all part of me."

"I am happy with the system and the care."

"It's about give and take, they have a job to do."

"Some receptionists are better than others, all of them are okay but some go the extra mile."

"The surgery is wonderful compared to my last one. I have been here between 10-12 years."

"I think they are very good, especially when you hear what people say about other surgeries, I can't grumble at all."

"The receptionist knows me and it helps."



Our observations

Most patients appeared to be happy with the telephone booking process and therefore did not feel the need to find out how to book online.

Some patients may not be booking online due to barriers faced in terms of digital skills, not having the relevant ID and a lack of awareness of how and when appointments can be booked.

Whilst there was a lot of useful information on the notice boards, due to the numerous posters and signs, it was quite difficult to find information quickly. We also observed some out-of-date information displayed.

Considerations



Support with online services

Whilst patients were happy overall with the telephone appointment booking system, it may be advantageous for some patients to be provided with clear information about how to make appointments or seek help online.



Notice boards

Patients may be able to access information more easily if the notice boards in the waiting rooms are themed and regularly updated.



Response from Ridgeway Surgery

"Thank you for providing us with this report.

I have shared this with our Partners and management team and will also share it with our PPG.

We are very pleased with the results."

- Practice Manager

Response to considerations



Support with online services

We will promote this option more clearly to patients

We will also promote the ability to put forward admin and medical queries via our website



Notice boards

We will appoint a staff member to keep better check on the boards, create themed boards and ensure they are kept up to date.





Thank you

We were pleased to listen to patients at Ridgeway Surgery, who were very happy to share their views.

We heard a range of responses and 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]

Notes

***Patient Access** connects you to local health services when you need them. Book GP appointments, order repeat prescriptions and discover local health services for you or your family via your mobile or home computer.

healthwatch

Dudley



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