Friends & Family – You said, We Listened

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| **You Said….** | **We Listened….** |
| Why is it totally empty when I come into the surgery? | Just because the waiting room may look empty when you come into the surgery, it doesn’t mean that the doctors and staff have nothing to do.  Not every patient needs to come into the practice; the pandemic helped us accelerate the use of IT. For example, clinicians can review conditions from photographs or video consultations and so can be managed remotely. This often suits patients better as they don’t have to take time off work.  Some conditions are better seen by other health professionals such as physiotherapists, clinical pharmacists etc who may not be based in our building.  Regal Chambers Surgery is a large practice with consultation rooms on two floors. There are therefore several waiting areas and it may not be obvious that patients are in the surgery and waiting to be seen. |
| Why do appointments not run on time? | All of the face to face appointments are 15 minutes and the clinicians work hard to try and keep the appointments running on time.  We understand that it can be frustrating and inconvenient for you.  Unfortunately, there will occasionally be patients who present with complex issues or who are in distress. There may also be patients who require admission to hospital and this can take time to organise.  These appointments will inevitably take longer than their allocated time.  We would ask for your understanding and patience at times of delay. |
| Why is it difficult to get an appointment? | We understand that it is sometimes difficult to access an appointment at the surgery and we apologise for any frustration that this causes.  All staff in the practice work hard to ensure that we are able to offer as much capacity as possible to meet the over increasing demand.  The demand for appointments is something that is frequently reported in the national media. There are a variety of reasons for this including a growing population, an ageing demographic, shortage of GPs and an increased awareness of healthcare services.  The practice has introduced several initiatives to try and improve access to the surgery.  We introduced a telephone assessment appointment system in May 2019 and all patients are required to speak to the duty clinician in the first instance. This may be a doctor or a Nurse Practitioner depending on the symptoms described. The duty clinician will assess the patient on the telephone and decide what the urgency is, if the symptoms can be managed remotely or if and when a patient needs to be brought in for a face to face appointment. Patients may have a preference about which clinician that they speak to or see. This can be accommodated, however, the patient does need to speak to the triaging clinician in the first instance.  We recruited three new Salaried GPs to the team last year and an additional Nurse Practitioner.  We commissioned a new telephone provider in July 2022. The dashboard allows us to see the number of patients calling. We know that our busiest times to receive telephone calls are on a Monday, Tuesday and Friday morning. Our clinical admin team supports the receptionists and will help answer telephone calls with requests for appointments for the first hour on these days of the week.  We have also increased the number of receptionists employed by the surgery.  Patients can request appointments using our online consultation tool (AccuRx) via our website. These are processed and managed in the same way as telephone calls. |
| The phone appointments are too short | Telephone assessment appointments on the duty clinician list are short and are used purely to gather information for the clinician to make a decision.  Routine telephone calls to discuss issues such as results are limited to 7.5 minutes. Most information can be shared with patients via text or email and this is the preferred method of contact by the surgery.  If there are complex issues to discuss or more than one issue, a double appointment can be booked when deemed necessary. |
| My appointment was cancelled for the third time, an hour before the appointment was due and via text message. | We are sorry that we sometimes have to cancel appointments and we can understand the frustration that this causes.  The main reason that appointments are cancelled is due to sickness in the team and we get very little notice when this happens; the most efficient way of cancelling non-urgent appointments is via text. |
| Wait for blood test appointment | We have limited availability at the surgery and Bedford Road, however, patients are able to book an appointment online at the Lister Hospital. |
| Booking Appointment 3 months plus in advance | Our nurse appointment templates are usually on 3 months in advance. We have been making adjustments to the templates and this maybe why there has been limited availability. |

*Feedback provided by patients via Friends & Family is anonymous. There is some feedback that we are unable to generically comment on due to confidentiality. We would encourage patients who have any specific concerns that warrant investigation to contact the surgery as per our Complaints policy.*