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. |
| Reception staff need customer care training | We understand that the reception area is the first point of contact for our patients and it is important that this experience is positive and supportive. We are committed to providing regular customer care training for our reception team. Our training sessions are held both internally and in collaboration with other surgeries in our Primary Care Network. This approach allows us to share best practice. |
| Prescription department not very good | Prescription requests are generally managed by our reception team and then tasked to the doctor for authorisation. It typically takes up to 2 working days to authorise a repeat prescription. If medication needs to be reauthorised or is not on repeat, it may take up to 5 working days. We kindly ask patients to submit their prescription requests in good time, ideally up to 7 days in advance, to ensure there is no disruption in medication supply. Please direct any specific concerns to the surgery directly. |
| Would be nice to see our own doctor for a change | We understand the importance of continuity of care and the comfort of seeing a familiar face.  Patients are registered with a named GP primarily for administrative purposes. Our telephone appointment system requires patients to initially speak with the triaging clinician who will assess the clinical urgency of the situation.  If it is deemed clinically appropriate for you to be seen on the same day, the choice of GP may be limited due to availability. However, if your condition is non urgent you are welcome to request your preferred doctor and we will do our best to accommodate your request. |
| It is not as simple as it could be and one way communication | We are sorry to hear that your experience with our service has not been straightforward and that communication has felt one-way. We strive to make our services as user friendly as possible and to keep patients informed of any changes or issues. We welcome any constructive suggestions you might have on how we can enhance our communication and service delivery. Please feel free to share your ideas with us as we are committed to making positive changes that benefit all our patients. |
| Urine sample was lost | We understand the inconvenience caused when samples get lost and need to be repeated. Samples are collected by an external courier each day and transported to the laboratory for analysis. Unfortunately there are occasions when samples may get lost in transit and we are unable to provide specific reasons for this occurrence. We provide feedback on these issues to minimise such incidents in the future. |
| I am not confident that I would get a face to face appointment if this was needed | We understand the importance of having access to face to face appointments when needed.  While we operate a telephone appointment system, please be reassured that our surgery is committed to offering face to face appointments whenever they are deemed clinically necessary. The initial telephone consultation with the triaging clinician helps us to assess the urgency and nature of your healthcare needs.  This system allows us to effectively manage demand and ensure that there are sufficient face to face appointments available for those who require them. Our priority is to provide you with the appropriate care in a timely manner. |
| Surgeries need to be linked so that information can be accessed | All surgeries in the Primary Care Network (Regal Chambers, Portmill, Bancroft and Whitwell) use the same clinical system and all information is therefore available to the clinicians that you may see in Extended Access. |
| Not satisfied – ended up at the hospital after several appointments | Our GPs are dedicated to managing patients primary health care needs within the surgery. However, there are times when secondary care input is required and in such cases, attending a hospital is necessary. This approach ensures that you receive the most appropriate and comprehensive care for your condition. Our priority is always your health and wellbeing and we aim to provide the best possible outcomes by collaborating with specialists when needed. |

*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.*