

## **Enter and View Report**

### **Experiences of Accessing a GP in Brent Revisiting selected GP practices in 2023:**

Park Royal Medical Centre, Health & Well-being Hub,  
Central Middlesex Hospital, Acton Lane, NWW 7NS

**Name of Practice Manager:**

Mr Meysam Hemmati

**Date of Visit:**

7/10/2023

**Authorized Representatives:**

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## Overview

Healthwatch Brent carried out a series of Enter and View visits to three GP surgeries in Brent. The visits were intended to allow Healthwatch Brent’s Enter and View team to follow up on recommendations made in our April 2022 report ‘Experiences of accessing a GP in Brent’.

Our Enter and View team were able speak to patients and staff, hear their feedback and understand what is working well at these practices as well as any areas for improvement. Aside from the Harness Hub, these are all practices that we made recommendations for in our previous GP Access report. Additionally, we chose to visit the Harness Hub to see how extended access has supported local patients.

In total, we completed three Enter and View visits this quarter: Stonebridge Practice, Oxgate Garden Surgery and The Harness Hub at Park Royal Medical Practice.

## Methodology

Our previous report ‘Experiences of accessing a GP in Brent’ used surveys and focus groups to understand barriers that were stopping people from accessing primary care from their GP. Due to the timing of the project, it was not possible to undertake Enter & View visits – this was due to Covid-19 precautions. However, the team collected feedback about a number of practices through other channels, and shared recommendations with individual GP practices.

In order to follow up on these recommendations, we planned a series of Enter & View visits in autumn 2023. These aimed to explore the following key outcomes:

1. To understand the patients' experiences of booking a GP appointment, and whether the process could be improved
2. To understand whether patients were offered different ways of booking appointments
3. To identify potential barriers to accessing primary care, and make further recommendations for improvement if required
4. To understand the staff's viewpoint on what is working and what could be done better.

Additionally, we wanted to find out patients' knowledge and experience of social prescribing. Although this was not part of the original project, it has been raised as an area of interest by residents in the interim.

## Findings: key themes from patients

### Patients' satisfaction with making appointments

The table below summarizes the responses received when respondents were asked to describe the ease of making an appointment.

Name of GP Surgery	Easy	Okay	Hard	Very difficult
Park Royal Medical Centre	8	-	-	2

The majority of patients found it easy to make an appointment. Patients mainly made appointments over the phone.

### Making Appointments using PATCHS

Most patients stated that they did not use online facilities for making appointments. Using the phone was the method used by patients interviewed.

"I have never heard of PATCHS and I don't use online at all."

"I like speaking to a human. I am diabetic and have poor eyesight, so I wouldn't be able to use online."

### **Waiting times after contacting the surgery**

The table below summarizes the responses received when respondents were asked to describe how they waited between first contacting the surgery and having the appointments (e.g., one day, one week, etc.)

Name of GP Surgery	Same day	One day	A few days	One week	More than one week
Park Royal Medical Centre	3	2	1	1	3

More than 50% of the patients questioned had an appointment with one or two days. The remainder stated that they waited between one and two weeks.

### **Communications and staff attitudes**

The table below summarizes the responses received when respondents were asked to describe if staff were easy to communicate with.

Name of GP Surgery	Satisfactory Communication with staff	Good communication with staff
Park Royal Medical Centre	3	7

The overwhelming majority of patients were happy with staff attitudes and, in general, staff were perceived as being very positive.

*“Staff are so kind here.”*

*“They know what they’re doing.”*

### **Waiting times in the waiting room**

Waiting times in the communal waiting area were not long; the average wait was 10 – 15 minutes.

*“I don’t have to wait long, around 10 minutes.”*

### **Face-face appointments**

Face-face appointments were offered to the majority of patients.

*“It’s nice to see a human and have one to one time.”*

## Quality of care

Patients questioned about the quality of care at the GP Surgery responded favourably.

"They are polite and kind."

"Even though it is busy, we get seen quickly."

"Always polite here."

"Better to come here than elsewhere."

## Patients' suggestions on what could be improved

Patients had a number of suggestions including reducing waiting times, reducing use of digital technology and offering more signposting to other services.

"Reduce waiting times for appointments, had to wait 2 weeks."

"Don't like technology, I have poor eyesight (diabetes.)"

"More signposting to other services, please."

## Social prescribing and referrals

The role of social prescribing was carefully explained to patients. They were then asked to share their experiences of social prescribing.

Name of GP Surgery	Never heard of social prescribing	Has some experience of social prescribing
Park Royal Medical Centre	8	2

"I have issue with referrals at my local GP, luckily I was covered by BUPA private insurance and was able to talk to a specialist about the GP scan and get the correct private treatment."

"We need more face-face.

"I ask for referral letter from my local GP, needed a breast scan. Luckily my plan covers talking to the GP on my behalf. I asked GP where to go for a scan - my private insurance policy helped me sort the problem.

"I use my own contacts, such as my family."

"GP should tell us about social prescribing, but they don't."

"More face-face, and less technology."

The majority of patients were happy to be seen face-face at the Surgery. Many commented that it was easier to be seen at Park Royal Medical Centre than other places. Signposting to local services and social prescribing did not seem to be experienced by most patients interviewed.

## Findings: key themes from staff

The Enter & View representatives held discussions with Staff and asked them to fill in a questionnaire sharing their views on working at the practice.

### Relations with Patients

Staff informed us that they had good relationships with patients.

### Online booking system, PATCHS

Staff gave us the following feedback:

"They can call up if they can't do it (PATCHS) and we can do it on their behalf."

"Each member of reception has a specific role, e.g., emails, PATCHS, etc. This helps."

"I worked here before PATCHS and phone-calls in early morning was difficult because you run out of appointments. Now we can prioritize appointments using PATCHS."

"We have more time now, since PATCHS."

### How has your job changed since the pandemic?

Staff shared the following with us:

"2 years here, after pandemic patients are more involved in triage."

"We are back to normal now."

“We don’t run out of appointment now.”

“We sometimes have a higher influx in mornings, but no more patients in afternoon.”

“Sometimes we have less doctors available but have advance nurse partitioner instead.”

“With e-Consult we use to get flooded with appointments over the weekend, since it doesn’t close over weekend. PATCHS has lots of advantages.”

“I had a chance to learn more things outside of my receptionist role.”

### **What changes would you make?**

Staff were happy with their situation and were particularly pleased with their friendly relationships with patients.

“Time to complete administration duties can sometimes be limited.”

“We could improve PATCHS and have clinicians feedback more often.”

## **Service details**

### **Staffing Levels:**

Number of GPs:	10
Number of Health Assistants:	1
Number of other staff:	10

**Extended Access:** Yes, PCN team are operating from our surgery on Thursday 2pm – 7pm and Saturdays 9am – 7pm

**Number of hours GP face–face appointments Available:** 65% – 70% of GP appointments are face to face

**Do you offer longer appointments if needed?** Yes we are booking double or triple appointment for the complex patients or patients with special needs

**What is the total number of face-to-face appointments on an average day?** Between 60-70 GP appointments in average (excluding other clinicians)

60% - 70% same day booking and the rest booking in advance

**How many phone consultations does a GP see/offer in an average day?**  
35-45 telephones

**In a typical week how many hours of other practitioner's appointments are available? (e.g., nurse practitioner, nurse, health care assistants etc.)**  
80 hours

**How many home visits are undertaken in an average week?**  
3 to 5

**Do patients have a choice of what type of appointment they would like, e.g. telephone consultation or face to face?** Yes

**Could you give examples of adaptations made during the pandemic**  
The practice started sending blood pressure machines and oximeters to patients during the pandemic, and still do this.

The practice started providing training for our patients how to use the Patient Access App, where they can see their medical records and request their medications without calling or coming to the surgery. This is an ongoing support.

Same training is provided for online consultation (PATCHs)

"We tend to be very busy, things are back to normal."

"Things work efficiently, patients are mostly friendly and things work well."

## **Summary and review of previous recommendations**

Patients were very satisfied with the care that was delivered at Park Royal Medical Centre. The standard of staff communication and politeness was



very high. Staff at the entrance were incredibly helpful to patients and the entire staff gave a professional service – which should be recognized.

Park Royal Medical Centre is a clean and well maintained; the waiting room walls are decorated with brightly colourful art work – making it a pleasant waiting area for children and adults.

The Enter and View visits gave the Healthwatch Brent team an opportunity to see how the GP Surgery has supported better access for patients since the previous visits were conducted. Patients did feel better supported and that things had improved since the original project was carried out. Offering patients a choice of whether to be seen face to face or via a telephone call is a great example of best practice. Several positive changes adopted during the pandemic, such as sending out equipment to patients' homes, have been continued.

## Recommendations

- Increase use of social prescribing, and increase frequency of sign-posting to local services, organisations/community groups that patients may benefit from. For example, patients could benefit from better awareness of Brent Health Matters public engagement events and local community/ wellbeing groups. Displaying and sign-posting such information would be beneficial.
- Display up-to-date leaflets (including diverse languages used in the community) so as to give patients more choices and knowledge as to what is available locally.

## Response from Practice Manager

We have written to the practice manager to share our draft report. However, as of publication we have not received a response to the recommendations.

## Conclusion and next steps

The staff at the GP Surgery was very friendly and efficient. The environment was very friendly and busy - the waiting room was full. Staff were very approachable. Staff at entrance gave a very warm welcome to arriving patients and constantly at hand to help patients.

Improvements to accessing social prescribing would help reduce dependence on appointments and help people manage their conditions.

We found that many patients were not aware of social prescribing; the need for better referrals to social prescribers is evident. Improvements to accessing social prescribing would help reduce dependence on appointments and help people manage their conditions. There is a need for local GP Surgeries to actively support patients to access existing support in their local community.

We will arrange to meet with the Practice Manager in six months to follow up on this work and see how our recommendations have impacted care at the practice.