

## **HILLSIDE PRACTICE**

### **Local Patient Participation Report, April 2013 to March 2014**

#### **Background information**

Hillside Patient Forum is a practice patient group which has been in existence since soon after the practice moved premises in 2008. This group holds monthly meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month between 6.30 and 8.00 pm. The meetings are held at the practice and are always attended by one of our GPs. Any patient is welcome to attend. The meetings are advertised on the Patient Forum dedicated notice board and the practice "envisage" screen system.

#### **Patient Forum development**

- In an effort to expand the patient forum (appreciating that meetings are not for everyone) in 2011 we invited patients to become a "Patient Forum Consultant". This enabled us to develop a "Virtual Group" which consists of patients who are happy for us to contact them periodically either by email or post to ask their opinion on specific issues relating to the services offered by the practice.
- Registered patients can join this "Virtual group" at any time by filling in a registration form obtainable from the Patient Forum table display in the waiting room or on reception. We are conscious that the age range of members is biased towards older members and have made attempts to recruit members in the younger age groups by leafleting amongst parents at the local school and Children's Centre. This has not been as successful as we would have liked but did bring in a few new members.

#### **Composition of patient survey 2014**

- It was discussed and agreed what the content of this year's survey should be during the Patient Forum meeting in January. It was agreed to use the internet based survey method used for the previous survey, with paper copies available on reception for patients who were unable to access the internet.
- Several actions had been taken in response to concerns raised in previous patient surveys. These actions included:-

1. More staff to man the telephones during the busiest times
2. An increase in the number of incoming phone lines
3. Some changes to doctor's surgery times and availability to try and improve access to care for patients who wanted to see a specific doctor.
4. Customer care training for receptionists

The major action taken following last year's survey was to try and improve access and care by introducing the "Dr First" appointment system. This requires the doctor to speak personally to each patient requesting advice and offering a face to face appointment on the same day if one is needed. A huge amount of time and organizational effort was put in to trying to make the new system work as smoothly as possible. As a result the practice now deals with a 15% increase in the number of patients that are dealt with on a daily basis, with each doctor more easily being able to pick up any shortfall during times of holiday or sickness. Very few patients are put off until the next day meaning that we can be very responsive to demand.

### **Deciding the survey questions**

The questions to be asked were decided after input from the Forum meeting in January. It was felt that the questions should test whether there had been any improvement in the areas previously flagged up as concerns. The practice is considering putting extra self-help material on the website as well as providing e-consultations and wanted to seek opinions as to whether these would be useful since they would involve considerable work.

- In line with the above agreements our survey was produced and was made accessible to patients via the practice website and in paper format. The survey was available to answer on the Practice website between February 12<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2014.
- Those patients on our Virtual Group were emailed invitations to participate in the survey. This message also included an invitation to attend our Patient Forum meeting on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2014 where the results would be presented and an opportunity given to discuss the findings and identify actions to be taken. In addition we posted hard copies of the survey to a number of patients who were chosen at random from those who received telephone advice only.

- Patients were also invited to participate in the survey by advertising it on the practice "Envisage" system message screens in the waiting room.

The survey results are now available for viewing via the appropriate link on the practice website. A total of 91 patients participated which is the highest participation level over the years that we have been running the survey, and represents a very considerable increase from the 33 responses to our previous survey.

### **Survey result discussion**

The purpose of this part of the report is to pick out salient points from the patient survey and detail the actions that the Practice has agreed to take in response to the survey.

The survey results were presented and discussed during the patient group meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Disappointment was expressed with the number of replies which we received although they were up by nearly 200%. The patient group members were generally very supportive of the Dr First appointment system and felt that other patients were perhaps not generally aware enough of the advantages. They suggested a number of ways by which the practice could improve awareness of the benefits of the system including writing an article for the next patient group newsletter.

91 patients responded to the survey compared to 33 respondents last year. Only one patient below the age of 40 responded in 2013 whereas this year 19 [21.3%] respondents were aged under 40. In addition a greater number [37%] were in work or full time education. We feel that this was a much more representative group of patients this year when compared to last year.

The majority of respondents [70%+] book their appointments by phone. It came across strongly and possibly unsurprisingly in this years survey that the ability to get through quickly on the phone and speak to a pleasant, helpful receptionist was very important to a large number of those who responded. 76.42% of respondents found our receptionists to be helpful or very helpful with a further 19.1% rating them as satisfactory. It was pleasing to note that 65.16% of patients found it easy or quite easy to get through on the phone, although this was a reduction from last year. We feel that this may be due to the fact that the receptionists have had to

explain the new appointment system which does take longer. It should be noted that we have had several additional dedicated outgoing lines installed so that the doctors can make their calls without using all our incoming lines.

It was noted that the number of respondents who were able to get an appointment which suited them easily or quite easily was 68% which was down from 75.76% last year. We were pleased that 61.36% of respondents found it easy or quite easy to get an appointment with the doctor of their choice this year compared with 60.61% last year.

It was pleasing to the Practice that almost everyone who answered the questions regarding patient satisfaction with the doctors and practice nurses at Hillside were either satisfied or very satisfied with the care they had received. It was also noted that approximately 83% of patients were happy with the overall care that they received at Hillside Practice. This is a small improvement from last year, with no-one recorded as very unhappy.

There did not seem to be a clear appetite from patients for either more self-help material or e-consultations with 52.3% in favour of the former and only 43% interested in the latter.

There were several interesting comments in the free text sections of the survey which deserve further comment or action.

Although many positive comments were received regarding the new appointment system it is clear that a significant number are still finding the callback system difficult to navigate.

We feel overall that many patients have only used the Dr First system on a few occasions and have not yet had time to fully appreciate the advantages of being able to speak to a doctor "on the day" with an guaranteed appointment arranged if necessary later that same day. Against this is the potential inconvenience of having to wait for a callback from the doctor before an appointment can be made, although this is the only way that the practice can cope with demand without building up a large waiting list for appointments.

Our policy of not informing patients which doctor is providing the Saturday or late Monday appointments was commented on. The purpose of this is to keep these as

far as possible for patients who are unable to attend normal appointments for whatever reason [usually work related] and to prevent those appointments being filled by patients who can perhaps attend at other times and just want to see a particular doctor. We will discuss this again within the practice.

### **Actions to be taken.**

### **Response to improve access**

- The major action that the practice has taken is the introduction of the "Doctor First" ringback system to try and further improve patient access to medical advice. This has been discussed at several patient forum meetings and a member of the forum attended one of the meetings arranged by the PCT regarding the initiative. This initiative is a massive change to the way we have worked in the past and may take some time to get used to - both for patients and ourselves. We would like to use subsequent patient surveys to further assess the patient response to the new system.

### **Actions in response to comments received**

- We are considering the employment of a further GP partner which, together with actions to increase flexibility of current working practices should increase the number of appointments which we can offer and reduce the time taken for patients to receive a callback.
- We are introducing dedicated callback slots for patients who ring in response to letters or phone calls from the practice [e.g. for results etc.] to make it easier for them to speak to the doctor who initiated the test and thus improve personalisation.
- We acknowledge the difficulties a minority have with receiving callbacks at work and will try to put systems in place to help with this including making it clear that if a patients ask for a callback at a particular time we will do our very best to make sure that this happens on time. We are also looking further into making some callbacks pre-bookable on the internet although we are having difficulty linking this to our new computer software system which may have many advantages but is proving difficult for us to navigate.

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26.3.14