**Response to Report: *Getting an appointment with your GP***

**ORGANISATION: North West Surrey Clinical Commissioning Group**

**DECISION MAKER: Nikki Mallinder (Head of Locality Development)**

**RECEIVED: 27/10/2014**

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| **Summary** |
| North West Surrey understands the difficulties patients experience when accessing appointments in General Practice and we have been working with our member practices to see how we can support them to improve access. The CCG has taken an evidence-based approach to identify key areas for improvement. This has included commissioning a Practice level audit to support how access and urgent care is managed across all Practices. Alongside this, the CCG continues to give careful consideration of a wide variety of other quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. A&E attendances, unplanned admissions, patient satisfaction surveys). Identified improvement themes are being addressed at a Practice level and North West Surrey will continue to support its Practices in the coming months. In particular: 1. Primary Care Foundation – working together to outline intensive ‘packages’ of support to each practice and deliver improvements by sharing best practice.
2. Co-commissioning – the CCG supports the co-commissioning of Primary Care. Our Strategic Commissioning Plan includes some intensive re-modelling of the health and social care system that will require flexibility of resources to improve quality and consistency of our services.
3. Integrated Care – All 42 practices have agreed to implement physician-led locality hubs co-located with existing community hospitals, starting in 2014/15. Locality hubs will deliver a GP led integrated frailty service, medical cover to walk-in centres and extended physician cover in the out of hospital environment.

Anecdotal evidence from the recent Healthwatch report has also highlighted an opportunity to communicate some of these initiatives more clearly to our patients. The CCG intends to hold a patient engagement meeting this year and will work with Healthwatch to gather patient feedback and achieve successful outcomes. |
| **Quote** |
| We’re committed to working with our GP member practices to enable people across North West Surrey to enjoy the best possible health. A key element of this is patient access to GP appointments, which we know is an issue across many areas nationally. Our recent work with the Primary Care Foundation has enabled us to work with our member practices to identify any gaps in service and develop practice level improvement plans to resolve this. We’ll continue to work with practices to share best practice and identify better ways of working that deliver first-class primary care, and we’ll be holding patient engagement events in the near future to ensure we’re succeeding in this.Nikki Mallinder, Head of Locality Development |
| **Detail** |
| Are there experiences documented in the report that you were not expecting? |
| North West Surrey understands the difficulties patients experience when accessing appointments in General Practice and we have been working with our member practices to see how we can support them to improve access. In September 2013, the CCG commissioned the Primary Care Foundation (PCF) to undertake an audit at Practice level to support how access and urgent care is managed, providing us with comparative data across our 42 Practices. The key findings of the Healthwatch report suggest:* 34% of people have always or often been able to get an appointment on the day of their choosing, and 28% have always or often got an appointment at their chosen time.
* 37% of people have either rarely or never been able to get an appointment on either the day or at the time they would like.
* 78% of surgeries surveyed say they offer online booking whilst only 36% of patients report that online booking is an option.
* A third of respondents were able to book an appointment with their GP of choice either ‘always’ or ‘often’, and a further third were ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ able to book with their preferred GP.
* ‘Telephone roulette’ -  Complaints centre on having to phone at a set time, having to repeatedly hit redial, not be able to get through, getting cut off and costly calls.

The PCF audit included a detailed review of the national GP Patient Survey 2013-14 results. This national survey considered a larger population than the Healthwatch report, and while it supports many of the key findings above, there are some key differences which should not be overlooked. In particular: * 68% of patients expressed a good satisfaction with their overall experience of making an appointment (26% stated ‘very good’ and 42% stated ‘fairly good’).
* 74% of patients expressed a preference for making an appointment over the phone compared to only 45% of patients preferring online (some of whom will have also expressed a preference for the telephone).

Taking all of this information into consideration, the CCG will continue to work with the practices to improve the areas identified in both reports. In addition, the CCG will focus on improving the telephony services in all practices whilst working with a smaller collection of practices to pilot more ‘modern’ approaches such as on-line, email and Skype. |
| What work, initiatives or decisions are you aware of that will support improvements in the experiences of people accessing GP services in the next 12 months? |
| North West Surrey CCG commissioned the Primary Care Foundation in September 2013 to undertake a practice level audit to look in detail at how access and urgent care is managed in all 42 of our Practices. Our aim is to reduce unnecessary variation across organisations and between individual clinicians by supporting the sharing of best practice in areas such as telephone access, consultation rate, patient satisfaction and how to handle urgent care. The results of the initial survey showed a few strong and some more subtle themes emerging:* The benefits of early visit assessment and intervention to ensure patients receive quick primary care interventions and reduce the likelihood of hospital admission.
* Ensuring practices have the right number of ‘pre-bookable’ and ‘use on the day’ appointments to cater for the management of ongoing conditions.
* Resourcing ‘peak’ telephone times appropriately and improving access using alternative methods such as email, on-line booking and Skype.

In addition to the audit, the CCG continues to give careful consideration to a wide variety of other quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. A&E attendances, unplanned admissions, patient satisfaction surveys). Improvement themes above are being actively addressed through the implementation of practice level improvement plans, and North West Surrey will continue to support our Practices in the coming months in various ways. In particular: 1. Primary Care Foundation – working together to outline a more intensive ‘package’ of support to each Practice. These packages will be delivered by both the Primary Care Foundation and practices which have been identified as exemplars (i.e. already following best practice).
2. Co-commissioning – North West Surrey CCG supports the co-commissioning of Primary Care. Our Strategic Commissioning Plan includes some intensive re-modelling of the health and social care system that will require flexibility of resources to improve quality and consistency of our services.
3. Integrated Care – All 42 practices in North West Surrey have agreed to implement physician-led locality hubs co-located with existing community hospitals, starting in 2014/15. Locality hubs will deliver a GP led integrated frailty service, medical cover to walk-in centres and extended physician cover in the out of hospital environment.

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| What are the main barriers to improvements in the experiences of people accessing GP services? |
| General Practice is by far the biggest part of the NHS, over 300M consultations a year take place and demand and expectations are growing. Due to the demand on this service we have to look at innovative ways of working. |