

Report for Riverside Surgery

On the 7th June 2018 Martin Whitfield MP and Kezia Dugdale MSP held a public meeting in response to a number of complaints we had received from constituents.

More than 200 people attended and over 150 people left their contact details to be updated. This is an indication of the levels of concern within the community.

Despite some deeply worrying personal stories being raised and a range of serious concerns highlighted about aspects of the service at the Riverside Medical Practice, the atmosphere was constructive and it was widely acknowledged that staff at the surgery are doing their best under difficult circumstances.

The article in the East Lothian Courier which stated an online booking system was to be introduced caused significant concern.

The discussion around process and booking appointment raised the following questions:

When is the online system to be introduced?

How will this interact with the current system?

How can a patient be assessed via online booking?

Who is responsible for the design of the new system and who decides if it successful?

How many doctors are staffing the surgery and what is the full time equivalence?

How are vulnerable patients handled? How can people with mental health problems cope?

An appointment with a named doctor can take over two months, how can this be improved?

To improve times for follow up appointment why can't the Doctor make the appointment for follow up at the same appointment if necessary?

What is the cancellation/no show rate?

Patient experiences

One patient reported this experience: was making appointment for wife who had been coughing for 2 weeks, called NHS 24 but didn't get anywhere, so went back to surgery who said that's the system and referred to the nurse who in turn referred to chemist. Chemist provided replacement medication and inhaler but then referred to doctor, who couldn't find them on system and then finally put them in touch with chemist. He described a circular process in trying to see a doctor and had been waiting four weeks for call back from practice to arrange the appointment

One patient reported not getting an appointment in over a month and another reported a three and half week wait for her 10 year-old. A number of patients raised the point that there is a huge difference between a same day appointment and a one month wait. Whilst

the triage system does work well as does the routine appointments system, there is no interim system for those you are unwell but do not need immediate care.

Two patients reported difficulty around treatment for asthma

“Asthma for 30 years, called up to triage and put through to NHS 24 who 30 minutes later decided they could have an appointment. I was then unable to get an appointment and 3 weeks later blue light to the royal infirmary”

“Daughter has asthma and they have an emergency line, the receptionist made the decision that it wasn’t urgent, not a doctor or NHS 24, advised if not happy to go to a and e. Why should a receptionist make that decision?”

Speaking on behalf of partner with terminal cancer, a woman spoke of ringing for 45 mins and then going into the surgery only to be turned away despite explaining situation. She then called to NHS 24 and got a nurse. Letter advised to get blood test but no appointment ahead of chemotherapy on Saturday. Her partner now can’t use GP for blood tests and has to go back and forth to Edinburgh Western for these blood test now.

Several people spoke of the frustration in length of time to wait for an appointment to get test results.

“If the doctor asks you to come back following week, there isn’t an appointment the following week. When you collect test results, no medical staff give you the details and aren’t able to comment on the content or result.”

“5-week appointment, took 5 mins, I was advised to rebook for a blood test which took 2 weeks, then got results over the phone, and now 3 weeks into a 5 week wait to find out what the results mean.”

The call back caused concern as you were then sharing private information when you are on the bus, in the playground with your kids, or at work etc.

Communication

The majority were disappointed that no one from the local surgery or Health Board came along to the public meeting. It was felt that when they merger happened there was very little communication. People felt they were moved without notice or information. The meeting was very interested in the work of the Patient participation group.

How can the role of the patient participation group be improved? How do you get better information local people through a range of mediums and how can the surgery improve feedback and participation in the patient participation group?

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Riverside Team and NHS Lothian to discuss these points so we can communicate to our constituents about particular concerns and how their GP services will be delivered in the future.

