



Abbey Medical Centre: findings from a Healthwatch Reading visit

Where: Abbey Medical Centre, 41 Russell Street, Reading, RG1 7XD

When: December 4, 2015, for two hours and 40 minutes, in the morning

Who: 16 people spoke with a trained Healthwatch Reading staff member

Why: Healthwatch Reading is visiting all local GP surgeries to get patient views

How: Healthwatch used 'Enter and View' powers to visit on a pre-agreed date



What patients like

- 11 out of 16 patients were satisfied with the surgery opening hours
- 10 out of 16 could see the GP or nurse of their choice
- 10 out of 15 who answered this question said they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the quality of care, treatment and service they received



What patients dislike

- Can be difficult to get appointments
- The manner of reception staff varies



Healthwatch observations

- Two patients waited more than 30 minutes for their appointment but were not told why until they asked
- No patients had booked online, so this method may need promoting
- A member of the newly created patient participation group was there for the visit and is motivated to create an active group
- Reception area is quite private
- The large number of leaflets could be reviewed and categorised



Patients' suggestions

- Make it easier to book in advance
- Receptionists could be more flexible in dealing with patients
- Communicate appointment delays

'Doctor takes time to listen to problems, very good care given.'

'Some reception staff good, others could be more flexible in approach.'

'Surgery is very good for emergency appointments.'

'Could not get an appointment three weeks in advance.'



How the surgery has responded to the patient feedback

'Our aim has always been to give our patients the best possible care in a professional, caring and courteous manner. Our system allows appointments to be made up to one month in advance, but this can be limited for some services such as nurses' appointments and phlebotomy.

Notices in the waiting room and on our website explain how to make appointments online. If patients are not clear about it, they are always welcome to come and talk to the receptionists.

We appreciate patients' feedback and criticism, and we deal with complaints in a timely manner.

We always endeavour to keep clinics running to time, but sometimes doctors/nurses might be delayed due to emergencies. The receptionists will try their best to keep patients informed if a clinic is running late but this is not always possible if other patients are waiting or there are unforeseen emergencies. Sometimes patients do arrive early - one patient you spoke to arrived at 10.48am for a 11.30am appointment and they were seen at 12pm. Putting leaflets in the surgery is an effective way of bringing to the attention of patients, the great many services available to them. We also now have an information screen in the waiting room that we use to give out useful information. If patients cannot find what they are looking for they are welcome to ask receptionists who will do their best to help. The doctors and nurses also give patient information leaflets to patients that need them.'

More information about Abbey Medical Centre (supplied by practice)

Number of patients: 2,200, inner-city practice, variant population

Number of female GPs: 1, part-time

No. of male GPs: 1, part-time, locum

Wheelchair access: Yes

Open times: Monday 8am-7.45pm, Tuesday to Friday 8am-6.30pm

Appointment booking: People can book online

In-house blood tests: 3 times a week

Healthwatch Reading thanks patients for giving their time to share their views. We also thank practice staff for their assistance. Enter and View findings are only a 'snapshot' of services on a particular day/s so they are not a comprehensive judgement on the overall quality of the service.

Healthwatch Reading is an independent charity with some statutory powers. We can take your feedback in confidence, help you make complaints, and refer serious concerns to other agencies. Phone us 0118 937 2295, email info@healthwatchreading.co.uk, visit our website www.healthwatchreading.co.uk or visit us on the 3rd floor, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square Reading, RG1 3BQ.