



Western Elms Surgery: findings from a visit by Healthwatch Reading

Where: Western Elms Surgery, 317 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1AT

When: 4 February 2016, for two hours in the morning

Who: 28 people in the waiting area spoke with a Healthwatch 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

- 27 out of 28 patients were happy with the surgery's opening hours
- 24/28 patients praised the quality of care, treatment and service they received
- 18/28 patients said it was important to see a doctor or nurse of their choice, and 15/18 said they achieved this



What patients dislike

- Some patients said it was difficult to get through on the phone to book appointments
- Some people said they were unable able to get same-day urgent appointments



Healthwatch observations

- Large surgery with carpark
- Bright, open waiting area
- Reception set back from waiting area, offers some degree of privacy
- Electronic screen shows useful information such as '10 tips for your 10-minute appointment'
- Large and active patient participation group (chair of group present during visit)
- Surgery has signed up 141 people to its carers' register
- No patients during the visit said they had booked appointments online, so this may need promoting



Patients' suggestions

- Make it easier to get through to surgery by telephone
- Offer extra opening hours

'All the doctors, nurses and receptionists are first class - I have every faith in their abilities.'

'Thorough and quality care but never able to see same doctor, so no consistency - have to explain everything each time.'

'Very helpful when you get through, but often rings and rings with no answer.'

'If the opening hours could be extended in evening that would be good but I know that comes at a cost.'

Turn over to read the surgery's response to the feedback



How the surgery has responded to the patient feedback

'Western Elms Surgery would like to thank everyone for taking the time to be interviewed and for their feedback. We aspire to offer the best possible care to all of our patients and feel this is reflected in the majority of your comments.

We recognise that it has become more difficult to get an appointment in recent months and are pleased to advise our patients that there will be a new appointment system starting from 11 April 2016.

The demand on the appointment system to be seen on the day, even if not urgent, has been immense. On-the-day appointments will no longer be 'urgent appointments', they will be for people who want to be seen 'today' i.e. they have a day off work, they have an urgent need, it is convenient, it has been niggling for a while. These appointments will be booked on the day and you will be seen by the most appropriate clinician. You will be able to continue to book appointments online up to six weeks in advance.

In terms of continuity of care, each GP has a list size of 2,400 patients each. There is huge demand on the phones - we managed 35,000 calls in February. We have widely publicised our opening times, including extended hours, on the front door, patient leaflet and website; we will also add to the digital board. The surgery welcomes new members on its patient participation group, if you feel you could offer a small amount of time to this group, please contact Lisa Trimble, the practice manager.'

More information about Western Elms Surgery

Number of patients: 16,250

Number of female GPs: 2 full time, 4 part-time and 1 locum

Number of male GPs: 3 full time, 1 locum

Blood tests: Phlebotomist in daily

Wheelchair access: Yes

Opening times: Monday & Tuesday 8am-8.30pm; Wednesday 8am-6.30pm; Thursday & Friday 7am-6.30pm; Saturday 8.30am-12.30pm

Appointment booking: Online booking for routine appointments, by telephone for urgent and routine.

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, visit our website www.healthwatchreading.co.uk or drop in to us on the 3rd floor, Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ.