



**Enter and View visit: Dalston Practice
Hackney
20 December 2016**

Service	General Practice
Service address	1B Madinah Rd, London E8 1PG
Provider name	Dalston Practice
Date of visit	20 December 2016
E&V representatives	Gokcen Odabas Terry Stewart
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About Healthwatch enter and view visits

The Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007, as amended by the 2012 Act and directed by Local Healthwatch Regulations 2013, imposes a duty on health and social care providers (including the independent sector) to allow authorised representatives of Local Healthwatch to enter premises that they own or control to observe the services that are being provided. These are legally binding directions and are often referred to as ‘the right to enter and view’.

Purpose of the visit

The purpose of our visit was to observe services being provided at Dalston Practice and interview patients about their experiences. In the same week we visited a GP practice which shares a building with the Dalston practice. The aim was to provide commissioners with patient experience data across two practices serving the same neighbourhood.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Hackney would like to thank Dr Kawale and the reception staff for accommodating our visit. We would also like to thank patients for participating in our interviews. We are also grateful to our volunteer authorised representatives for conducting the visit.

Important Information for management/provider

- We expect Dalston Practice to provide an 'Action Plan and Response' on issues raised under the 'Recommendations' section.
- Copies of this report will be circulated to City and Hackney CCG, the CQC and will be made available on the Healthwatch Hackney website
- We will publish Dalston Practice's Action Plan and Response along with our report

Disclaimer

- The observations made in this report relate mainly to the visit carried out at Dalston Practice on 20 December 2017 which lasted for a total of 4.5 hours
- This report is not representative of all patients at Dalston Practice. It only represents the views of those able to contribute within the restricted time available.

How we carried out our visit

Healthwatch Hackney gave five working days' notice of our intention to visit and provided the practice with posters to advise patients of our presence on the day.

Our authorised representatives and a Healthwatch Hackney staff member spent four and a half hours recording observations and interviewed 17 patients and the duty doctor.

The first part of our visit took place shortly after the start of the daily patient drop-in session when several patients were waiting to be seen without an appointment. We returned to the practice after lunch to speak to patients who had made pre-booked appointments

Key information

- Dalston Practice has 6,100 registered patients and is open to new registrations
- Almost third of patients are under 18 while 11.1% are aged over 65
- Patients' ethnicities broadly reflect Hackney-wide demographic data
- [The Care Quality Commission gave the practice an overall 'good' rating](#) after inspecting the surgery in October 2015
- The practice has slightly below average rates of patient satisfaction for the quality of GP consultations compared with the London average (CCG data)
- It has above average ratings for GP access compared with London practices (CCG data)
- Extended opening is available on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings (for appointments only)
- The practice is shut on Thursday afternoons but patients can still call to make future appointments
- A walk in clinic is available every weekday between 9am and 9:30am
- The building is leased from NHS Property Services but cleaning and day to day maintenance is managed by the practice.
- The practice participates in all local enhanced services including long term conditions, Time to Talk, Frail Home Visits but excluding substance misuse
- There is 1 GP principal, 1 salaried GP, 4 part time locums (2 regular). The practice has advertised for two salaried GP vacancies
- Four of the GPs are male and two are female
- The practice is located off a main road with good public links
- The practice has a Patient Participation Group (PPG) of around 35 members. The group last met on 25 August 2016 and has not met since. A meeting is scheduled for June 2017.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

- Patients told us it was hard to book a routine scheduled appointment with waits of up to two weeks. The practice should review its appointments system to ensure more patients are able to book scheduled appointments in a timely fashion. The practice should also review the way in-coming calls are dealt with to ensure more consistent and reliable call handling.

Recommendation 2

- Patients who did not have English as a first language gave mixed feedback on their experiences. Therefore we recommend the practice review its process for arranging interpreters to enable all patients to understand their condition and ask questions. The practice should provide clear information on their website on how to request an interpreter and install Google Translate to the website to make the online information more accessible to non-English speaking patients.

Recommendation 3

- We witnessed a young father trying to use lift for his baby's appointment with the nurse upstairs but it wasn't working. The practice should ensure the lift is maintained and working at all times.

Recommendation 4

- While the practice understands its duties to disabled patients under the Accessible Information Standard, we would recommend that they actively ask each patient covered by Act about *their* preferences for communication and implement these (for example, some visually impaired patients may prefer texts and emails over braille).

Recommendation 5

- The practice should actively implement [the RCGP Autism Toolkit](#) and provide user-led autism training for practice staff to enable primary care access for autistic patients and families.

Findings/observations

What the practice does well

- Almost all patients told us they were happy with the care they received
- All patients we spoke to described the receptionists as polite and friendly
- Patients with long term conditions were happy with their care
- Patients noticed and appreciated recent improvements at the practice
- The three receptionists on duty during our visit appeared to be well trained and confident, including one who was a new staff member

Physical environment

- The main reception and waiting area was bright and well lit
- The waiting room layout ensures adequate space for waiting patients and space for wheelchair users and parents with children in buggies
- The reception desk was low in places enabling easy access for patients in wheelchairs who need to communicate with reception staff.
- The décor was of a good standard
- The practice was clean but one patient said the toilets were not always clean
- The lift to the upstairs waiting area and consultation rooms was out of order

Patient centred care/dignity/safety

- Most patients told us dealing with the reception staff was easy and they were polite
- Reception staff dealt with patients with confidentiality and discretion
- Two patients complained about delays in referrals for further tests
- One patient said that she could hear discussions at the reception desk while waiting upstairs
- One advocate felt that the practice could do better providing more continuity care for patients with learning disabilities who prefer to see the same doctor

Information

- Leaflet holders were well stocked and there were information posters on the walls
- Leaflets were up to date and information included a leaflet on the practice
- The website was clear and up to date with key information on the front page
- The website includes online services although this information was not prominent

Accessibility

- Staff speak a number of languages and support patients who do not have English as their first language
- The practice is aware of its duties to disabled patients under the Accessible Information Standard but it should pro-actively ask communication impaired patients about their preferred communication methods (for example braille, Easy Read BSL interpreters, text and email)
- The practice understands local assessment and diagnostic referral routes for autistic adults and children but it could enhance GP access for autistic patients by actively implementing the RCGP Autism Toolkit and introducing user-led autism training for staff

Appointments

- Patients told us it can take up to two weeks to get a scheduled GP appointment
- There was evidence that this delay can lead some patients to A&E
- Most patients we interviewed had booked a routine appointment
- Receptionists actively ensure that patients struggling to book an appointment are offered cancellation slots
- After the visit, one of our reps called the Dalston Practice four times on different days to test the phone lines, with mixed results
- One call took six minutes and 45 seconds to be answered and the call was immediately terminated by the practice
- Another call had to be abandoned because our rep was put on hold for too long,
- Two more calls were answered within a reasonable time frame and were responded to properly

Consultations with GP and practice nurse

- Patients rated the GPs and practice nurse highly
- A patient who struggled to speak English said his GP was patient and repeated information for him when necessary
- Another patient remarked she felt she wasn't taken seriously when she became ill after the birth of her second child because she couldn't speak good English
- Patients described the practice team as part of their family – patients were loyal to the practice and GP
- Two patients were frustrated they had to press repeatedly for a referral
- We heard a comment that the practice could do more to help patients with learning disabilities, for example ensuring where possible they are able see the same GP

Other observations

- We found the practice friendly and inviting
- Staff demonstrated respect for patients
- Staff were open and honest in response to our questions
- One patient was unhappy about the time it took for them to be referred to hospital
- Another patient was unhappy it took a complaint to get a hospital referral

Patient comments

Patient 1 *'The doctors here are great. We usually come for my husband as he is diabetic. They look after him here very well. Always call us when check-ups needed and to remind is about upcoming appointments. But if I wanted to book an appointment for myself I would have to wait quite a lot for it. The receptionists here are lovely. They are very helpful and kind.'*

Patient 2 *'All my family use this practice and we are all very happy with the services provided. We get good treatment. Personally I have enough time to spend with my doctor and am clear about my condition. He explains everything to me. Sometimes, but very rare, there are things I don't understand. Then I ask the doctor and he patiently repeats and explains. It's usually easier to book an appointment with the nurse rather than the doctor. More appointments available there. And she is really great. The receptionists are better than before. This place keeps improving their service which is good. I attend their meetings as much as I can and can tell that they take into account patients views and listen to what they have to say.'*

Patient 3 *'I am here today because my baby needs some vaccinations. I never had to book an appointment as never needed it. Four months ago we had to come here for an emergency because of my older daughter. They saw us pretty quick, in 20 minutes and sorted her problem. I didn't feel rushed or unclear about what was wrong with my daughter. Generally a good experience. The reception ladies seem to be very helpful and polite. The place seems clean. I just tried to use the lift because of the buggy but for some reason didn't work. Anyhow, I lifted the buggy and am fine, but wondering what a mother would do in this case.'*

Patient 4 *'I just joined the practice today. Never had to use the services before. It was pretty quick. Everything seems to be working well. The ladies at the reception welcomed me well with kindness and politeness. I like it so far.'*

Patient 5 *'We were here three months ago for my leg. My veins started bleeding suddenly. The doctor at that time said that there is nothing to worry about and everything will be fine, just need to take a paracetamol. That of course never happened. It stopped for few days and then happened again. And we came back and required further treatment. Then the GP gave us a link and reference number to log in and book the appointment with the hospital ourselves. The appointment time was after a month. So it's been 3 months now we have no solution for the problem and only taking paracetamol. Sad that we have to insist on treatment and it wasn't suggested first by the professional. I'm here today so the nurse can change my bandage, but had to wait two days for it. She is a good nurse, explains everything and helps you deal with your problem but she appears to be very busy. I'm surprised the toilets are very clean today. I wonder if it is because you guys are here. But they are not so clean often. The reception staff isn't bad but can't really say they are born to be receptionists.'*

Patient 6 *'Receptionists are kind and understanding. Doctors are also good. They explain everything and have a quick referral process. My confidentiality is kept when I'm at the reception and sharing my personal information. Seeing the nurse happens pretty quickly and the waiting time for an appointment is not that long. I called this morning and now I'm here to see the doctor. They hygiene is good here and I would recommend the surgery to others.'*

Patient 7 *'I am surprised it didn't take much to get the appointment. When I called this morning they said 'no appointments available'. Then I had to ask the receptionist if I can give my contact details so she can call me if there were any cancellation. Unfortunately she didn't ask me for my contact details. But she took my details and here I am. I had an operation while ago, and I've been coming here since because I experience some difficulties while breathing from time to time. The doctors look at me and say I'll be fine but never suggest anything. So I had to tell them actually what kind of treatment I want and I need and what tests should be done. I was complaining a lot and finally they referred me to a hospital for further treatment. This is quite disappointing.'*

Patient 8 *'Oh, I love this place Dr [lead partner] is like my father. He is my family. I love and respect him so. The receptionists are great here. They know my name and everything about me. I don't even have to stay in the queue. I've been using this practice for more than 30 years. I moved to Ilford but kept my GP practice as this is where I feel comfortable. The nurse here is great. She always calls me to remind me about my appointment.'*

Patient 9 *'I'm very pleased with the service provided by this GP practice. My mother uses the Sandringham Practice and I can see that she does not get the right treatment there and is not as good as the one I receive from here.'*

Patient 10 *Patient 10 had nothing but praise for both the staff and his GP. He said he was always treated with the upmost respect and was happy with the treatment he had received. He has been with the practice for 20 and was a patient with the former practice, before it relocated here. He followed his GP to this practice*

Patient 11 *He has had had the same GP for a long time and uses the services with the help of an interpreter. He is pleased with both services. The patient was worried because he had heard the practice would no longer providing interpreting services. He said the Turkish receptionist had helped several times when there were no interpreters available.*

Patient 12 *The patient was happy with the nurse and receptionists and immunisations. She comes to the walk in clinic to be seen urgently or comes in to the surgery to make an appointment. After the birth of her second child, she could not walk. She saw her GP for months but could not be treated or referred to hospital. She thinks she was not taken seriously because she cannot speak good English.*

Patient 13 *'I am very happy with my GP and the nurse. The walk in clinic is easy. The receptionists are good and discrete.'*

Patient 14 *'I would score them 3/5, because my GP and the nurse here are very good. Unfortunately the waiting time for a normal appointment is at least 2 weeks. Therefore instead of asking for hospital referral I go directly to A&E at the Homerton. Receptionists are good but you can hear everything people are talking about upstairs.'*

Patient 15/16 (couple) *'We are both very happy with our GPs, nurses and receptionists.'*

Patient 17 *'I have been registered to this practice for 60 years now. It was my mother's GP before. I'm happy about all the services and the nurse, receptionists are good, I think they care for people. I can get referred anytime I feel the need of being seen by professional.'*

Additional comment collected outside the visit

Advocate 1 *We spoke to an advocate supporting a patient with learning disabilities during a visit to neighbouring practice who told us she also advocated for a patient with learning disabilities registered at the Dalston practice. 'The person I support at Dalston practice is more likely to get random doctors. They are not as good.'*

Equality information

During our visit, we interviewed 18 people, 17 patients and the GP. We have also included feedback from an advocate who works with a patient at the practice who has learning disabilities.

Two patients had English as a Second language and sometimes struggled to speak and understand English

Ethnic category	
White	8
White other	2
Black or Black British	5
Asian	2

Gender	
Male	7
Female	10

Dalston Practice comments on recommendations and Action Plan June 2017

HWH recommendation	Dalston Practice response	Action to solve it	By when
<p>● Recommendation 1 Patients told us it can take up to two weeks to get a scheduled GP appointment", "There was evidence that this delay can lead some patients to A&E".</p>	<p>We find this a little difficult to understand as at any given time, there are a large number of appointments available in a much shorter timeframe than this. We usually say that patients can expect to get an appointment within 72 hours. We can only assume that the patient(s) was referring to making an appointment with a particular GP of choice - in which case there may be such a delay, though we do try to minimise this. We have a number of services in place at the practice, specifically with the aim of avoiding patient A&E attendances. These include walk in clinics each weekday morning, a 'duty doctor' urgent telephone service, and more. We will aim to improve communication so that patients are aware of the full range of services and available appointments on offer at the practice. We will do this by ensuring there are up to date posters on display, and that staff are clear in offering the nearest available appointment to patients.</p>	<p>Improve communication about services/appointments offered by checking/replacing posters, training staff</p>	<p>June 2017</p>
<p>● The practice should also review the way incoming calls are dealt with to ensure more consistent and reliable call handling.</p>	<p>With respect to telephone call handling, we are aware of some issues. There have been a number of new staff joining us recently, and whilst we have provided training on telephone calls, there is certainly room for improvement. We will continue to train all our reception staff on the importance of timely answering of telephone calls, and aim to set aside some staff during busier periods who will be dealing with telephone calls only. Our aim here is to continually monitor and improve.</p>	<p>Monitor and improve on telephone call handling, further reception staff training</p>	<p>Ongoing process, starting immediately – June 2017</p>

<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The practice reviews its process for arranging interpreters to enable all patients to understand their condition and ask questions. The practice should provide clear information on their website on how to request an interpreter and install Google Translate to the website to make the online information more accessible to non-English speaking patients</p>	<p>There have been some CCG wide changes to the commissioning of interpreter services. As a result, there are now far fewer languages for which in-person advocacy services are available. However, there is still a telephone interpreter service available for a large number of languages. These changes are outside of the practice's control, but we continue to try and provide the best possible experience for those patients who do not have English as a first language. We are also looking at ways to make our website more accessible to non-English speaking patients, and welcome the suggestion to add a translator function. We will look into this possibility imminently with a view to implementation by September 2017.</p>	<p>Website improvements including translator function</p>	<p>September 2017</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The practice should ensure the lift is maintained and working at all times.</p>	<p>This is an ongoing problem of which we are very much aware. The lift is frequently out of order, and we have asked Estates & Facilities multiple times to proceed with repair works. Unfortunately, to date, only temporary remedial action has been taken, and after each repair, the lift breaks down again after some days. We have also had the lift manufacturer come and take a look multiple times. We are pursuing this on a daily basis, and will look at having this fixed permanently as soon as possible. It is worth noting however, that in the meantime, for patients who are unable to use the stairs, the nurse (or other clinician) sited upstairs will come downstairs and see such patients in ground floor consulting rooms. We always offer</p>	<p>Permanent repairs to lift</p>	<p>Being chased up daily, repair should be imminent</p>

	patients the option of being seen on the ground floor and ask that they inform our reception team so that we can accommodate them on the ground floor level. Posters to this effect are displayed in front of the lift when it is non-operational.		
<p>e Recommendation 4 The Dalston Practice should actively ask each patient covered by Act about <i>their</i> preferences for communication and implement these (for example, some visually impaired patients may prefer texts and emails over braille).</p>	We welcome this suggestion and will ask each patient recorded as falling under the Standard about their personal preferences, and will do everything possible to implement these. We will do this for all identified patients by September 2017.	Implement preferences for all relevant patients with respect to AIS	September 2017
<p>e Recommendation 5 The practice should actively implement the RCGP Autism Toolkit and provide user-led autism training for practice staff to enable primary care access for autistic patients and families</p>	We are very keen to do all that is possible to improve our services for autistic patients, and welcome the suggestion to implement the RCGP Autism Toolkit. Our clinicians have already begun to look at this, and we aim to implement the toolkit in full by October 2017.	Implement RCGP Autism toolkit for relevant patients	October 2017