



March 2015

Dear Patient

As part of the Patient Participation Group DES 2014 the Practice agreed the following ACTION PLAN. During the past year we have reviewed the action plan to see whether the proposed changes have made a difference to the overall experience of Patients accessing the services provided at High Green Medical Practice. ***Our comments regarding our findings when the action plan was reviewed are shown in 'red'***

a) Improving Patients access to the Practice for the booking of appointments & general enquires

The Practice is to further increase the advertising of On-line appointment booking and also the alternative methods of contacting the Practice i.e. encouraging patients to attend in person to reduce telephone traffic. The Practice also plans to increase advertising to patients to encourage them to contact the Practice regarding non urgent enquiries after peak times i.e. after 10am. **Action Date – Ongoing from March 2014**

The introduction of online appointments have been a great success unfortunately we can only offer a small number of these types of appointments as releasing too many would reduce the number of appointments available to 'book on the day'. As a Practice we have also trialled a recorded message which patients hear when all 3 telephone lines are busy at the Practice which asks patients to call back after 10am for test results, prescription queries & letter queries. This additional telephone facility has had mixed success as a number of patients trying to access the Practice during the busy early morning period have encountered that after holding for a number of minutes that their call is cut off. We are currently examining this issue with our telecoms supplier and are hoping to resolve this as quickly as possible so that patients can book appointments either on the day or prebookable easily via the telephone. As an effect of the problem we are encountering with the telephone system we are currently seeing more & more patients attending the reception desk to book appointments.

b) Increase access to the booking of appointments – especially telephone access for on the day appointments

The Practice is to increase the number of staff available first thing in the morning to handle appointment bookings from both patients attending the reception desk and also contacting the Practice via the telephone system. It is hoped that the additional member of staff will reduce patient waiting times at both the reception desk and on the telephone lines.

Action Date – Introduced from February 2014

As a Practice we are aware that the phone lines are very busy between hours of 8am-9.30am in the morning. We now usually have 3 staff members (unless sickness or annual leave) on the phones with an additional member of staff booking appointments on the reception desk from 8am onwards. Each patient contact takes between 3-7 mins due usually to the complex nature of calls by patients. 3 patients can get through with 2 placed on hold and the remainder will receive a busy/ engaged tone. The phones do have a message informing that lines are busy and to call back later if the caller does not require an appointments. The additional staff member has reduced waiting times for calls to be answered but as stated in our response to action point (a) we are experiencing problems currently with the automated call handling system which are out of the control of our reception staff but are being reviewed by Practice management as a high priority.

c) Advertise more extensively within the Practice reasons why delays may occur in the Practice when patients are waiting to see Clinicians.

The Practice aims to increase patient understanding of the reasons why occasionally clinician's surgeries do not run to time resulting in patients waiting passed their allocated appointment time to be seen by clinical staff. By emphasising on displays within the waiting area, and also on the practices newsletters, website and via twitter the many reasons which are generally unavoidable that patients increased understanding will reduce their frustrations with support staff during extended waiting periods. All support staff will also increase the levels of communication with service users when a delay in surgeries occurs and will ensure that patients are keep up to date with the current status throughout their waiting time.

Action Date – Immediate

Advertising within the Practice has increased and we have tried to explain to patients that sometimes appointments run late and that if they are concerned about waiting times they are encouraged to speak to a member of staff. Posters also explain that a number of GP & nurse clinics can be running at the same time within the Practice & patients will be seen at different times. All reception staff will keep patients informed if a delay occurs in a clinician's surgery.

d) Enhance service users waiting times within the Practice

To further improve patients waiting times the Practice is to examine the possibility of introducing digital media/display screens into the Practice waiting room, it is hoped that this additional form of advertising will increase patient access to health education material and also improve the waiting experience by service users whilst in the Practice.

Action Date – March 2014 onwards

The Practice is currently looking at sourcing displays for the waiting room area; these screens will be used to provide health education information. In the meantime the Practice ensures that the waiting room is kept clean & tidy & up to date health education poster and leaflets are displayed for patients to review.

e) **Examine alternative methods of encouraging service users to attend PPG events**

The Practice has a healthy virtual PPG who are kept up to date with Practice activities throughout the year these PPG members are also asked to provide feedback regarding their thoughts on proposed changes in Practice services and initiatives when requested by the Practice.

The Practice wants to examine new ways to encourage patients and PPG members to attend Practice activities and meet the Practice team in person as despite our best efforts attendance of Practice based events are very low. We will review whether arranging events more regularly will increase participation or whether changing the format of events will encourage increased interest.

Action Date – April 2014 onwards

The Practice still finds it a challenge to encourage patients to join in with Practice patient participation events. We do have a healthy 'virtual' PPG (Patient Participation Group) which we send quarterly newsletters to and ask for feedback on how the Practice is operating. Unfortunately we still do not receive a high number of responses from services users through the use of comment slips & comment boxes. The Practice will continue to encourage patient to attend events & also be an active part of the Practice PPG. It is important for the Practice that we understand our service users needs & hear their views about how they feel the Practice is operating.