

NHS Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group  
PO Box 64529  
London  
SE1P 5LX  
Email: [c.gilmartin@nhs.net](mailto:c.gilmartin@nhs.net)  
Website: [www.southwarkccg.nhs.uk](http://www.southwarkccg.nhs.uk)

**BY EMAIL**

DATE: 14 March 2016

Dear Aarti,

Thank you for sending Healthwatch Southwark's report on GP services. NHS Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has developed a primary care quality assurance framework, which sets out key areas that the CCG will review when looking at primary care quality; GP access and patient experience. The information in the report from your engagement work with Southwark patients is helpful in understanding our local population's experience of local GP services and provides useful qualitative information in addition to the national and local data collected.

The CCG is concerned by some of the findings in the report, especially where patients have expressed their difficulty in registering with a GP or getting an appointment. I will address some of the issues raised in the report in turn to give you information about the work the CCG is doing to improve access to primary care services and to ensure patients have equal access to high quality primary care services across the borough.

As some of the some of the points in the report are in relation to core contract obligations, the CCG has also shared the report with NHS England, whose comments have also been incorporated in to the response.

**Registering with GP / Interpretation services and language barriers**

Both the CCG and NHS England were concerned that some patients found it difficult to register with a GP due to language barriers. The CCG expects all practices in Southwark to follow the national GP registration operating principles, which outlines a consistent approach to the registration process to ensure patients are not discriminated and have equal access to primary care services. This has been attached for your information.

Chair: Dr Jonty Heaversedge

Chief Officer: Andrew Bland

It is a contractual requirement for GP practices to ensure that all people residing in the practice area are able to register at their practice and receive primary care medical services. Specific concerns about a practice's registration process are managed by NHS England.

The CCG is reviewing the current primary care interpreting service and is planning to engage with patients and practices to ensure the service meets the needs of our local patients. Healthwatch will be invited to be part of this and feedback and concerns listed within the report will be used to inform the service changes to ensure that patient needs are met.

### **Getting an appointment with a GP / Patient centred GP care**

As the report highlighted, the CCG is aware that variation in access to appointments for patients can vary across Southwark practices. We have been working with practices to establish a consistent access policy so all patients have the same access to practices wherever they are registered.

To increase the number of primary care appointments, the CCG commissioned two extended primary care services (EPCS), which provide patients access to primary care services 8am – 8pm, 7 days per week. Together these services have been commissioned to provide an additional 87,000 primary care appointments per year. The CCG is working with the GP federations, as the providers of this service, to develop the service model to provide ensure these appointments are fully utilised for the benefit of our local population.

The CCG is also looking at how technology can be used to increase access and to make getting an appointment easier for patients. The CCG has outlined in our primary care commissioning intentions that a specification will be included within the contract that a practice will have to make 50% of appointments available for patients to book online by the end of March 2017. This will allow patients to book appointments at their convenience online without having to use practice telephone systems. The CCG will support practices to implement this model and will discuss with locality PPGs.

The report has highlighted the need to consider that patients requiring interpretation services benefit from these services. This will be included within the scoping work for the interpretation service and it will be helpful to have Healthwatch's input.

## **Finding information about GP surgeries and out-of-hour GP services**

The findings in your report correlate with the outcome of engagement work the CCG undertook prior to the setup of the EPCS. In response to patients saying they are unaware of the services provided in primary care and how to access these, the EPCS was commissioned to be seen as an extension of the patient's GP practice and therefore access to the service is via the patients GP practice or the out of hour's provider SELDOC. The CCG has undertaken a number of engagement and outreach events with patients regarding GP services in Southwark which has included information about the extended primary care services.

The report is useful in highlighting patient's experiences in getting information about GP services when they require an interpreter. The ambition would also be to engage with the interpreting service so messages are clear to patients that need an interpreter about where and how they can access services.

## **Making a complaint about GP services**

The CCG and NHS England were concerned that patients said they had a lack of trust in the complaints system. It is a contractual requirement for GP practices to establish and operate a complaints procedure in line with the NHS Complaints Regulations, which should be available and visible to patients. NHS England is responsible for monitoring practices in terms of this contractual requirement which is reviewed annually through the primary medical services assurance framework.

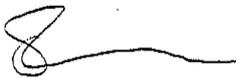
Both the CCG and NHS England welcome and encourage patient feedback on commissioned services. As part of the extended primary care service, the GP federations report patient experience indicators from local and the national GP patient surveys. The CCG and NHS England also review the National GP Patient Survey results and request practices review their results with their patient participation groups (PPGs) to identify where improvements can be made. The GP Patient Survey results will be a focus of the CCG pending practice visits as part of the quality assurance framework. The report provides useful additional qualitative information regarding primary care access and specific patient experience examples from your community outreach work. The CCG will also be discussing patient experience of primary care and the G P patient Survey results and the role of PPGs as part of the quality assurance framework at the forthcoming Engagement and Patient Experience Committee.

To ensure that GP practices are made aware of the report I am going to share it with the Primary Care Development Group, which GP federations and the Local Medical Committee (LMC) attend. The report will also be used by the working group who will be looking at the scope of a interpreting service. The CCG will contact Healthwatch shortly to ask you to input in to this project to ensure that the new service meets the needs of patients.

I understand that Healthwatch has identified a new representative to sit on the Primary Care Board. Please do let Jean Young and Rosemary Watts have their contact details so we can set up an introductory meeting.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,



Caroline Gilmartin  
Director of Integrated Commissioning