

TORBAY GP APPOINTMENT SYSTEMS

Feedback Summary Report

November 2014



FREEPHONE 08000 520 029

www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1153450



Introduction

In November 2014, independent health & social care consumer champion Healthwatch Torbay was asked to provide more details on feedback gathered around GP appointment systems and waiting times, after highlighting this as one of the main issues raised by the Torbay public. Overall, since April 2013, we have received a total of 254 instances of public feedback from across the whole of Torbay that is directly related to Torbay GP services. Of this, 152 cases (60%) were centred around GP appointment systems and waiting times. The following report looks into more detail at this feedback.



Facts and Figures

For the purposes of this report we will NOT be showing a comparison chart of all the 24 registered GP Surgeries in Torbay. Some have received more feedback than others and it is unfair to make assumptions on individual surgeries' appointment systems based on this. However, we can view an average ratings summary of how members of the public rate all GP Surgeries in Torbay, on the right.

As you can see, many people generally feel that the care they receive and the attitude of staff is very good at 4 out of 5 stars, however the waiting time ratings remain simply 'okay' at 2.5 stars out of 5.

Of the 152 cases of feedback centred on GP appointment systems and waiting times, 92 (61%) were negative and 60 (39%) were positive.

Average Ratings

CATEGORY	RATING
Cleanliness	★★★★★
Quality of care	★★★★☆
Quality of food (n/a)	
Staff Attitude	★★★★☆
Treatment explanation	★★★★☆
Waiting Time	★★★☆☆

**Due to category limitations, 'Appointment Systems' could not be included as a separate category, however, we have received plenty of feedback in this area*

Case Study

Most individual GP surgeries appear to have a mixture of both positive and negative feedback, we identified one particular surgery in Torquay whose patient feedback kept following the same trend. Most of the feedback we received from their patients regarding their appointment system included the feeling that:

- It was always difficult to make an appointment spend time waiting to get through to find no appointments available
- Calling at 8.30am was not user-friendly, particularly for people with work/childcare commitments
- Booking a same-day appointment was extremely difficult
- There was a need for a more flexible approach, including more evening/weekend appointments

Healthwatch Torbay contacted the surgery to inform them of this and found that the surgery had indeed tried a number of different systems for booking appointments but was struggling to cope with increased demand. They scheduled an extensive patient survey to guide them on the precise way of coping with this demand and implement a revised booking system. They have since invited us in to better understand the situation GPs and their patients are in regarding the booking of appointments.

We hope to take advantage of this opportunity imminently.



Patient Feedback Quotes

"Doctors are good if you ever get to see them. Appointment system is obstructive and badly designed, it seems to prevent access to a doctor."

"I have never been refused an appointment with a Doctor; at times it may not be my registered GP but you will be seen, even if it means sitting in the waiting room for a time."

"You ring for an appointment and can't get one with the same doctor, no patient continuity there. When you do get one it is never to suit you, and as a full-time worker this causes problems. Then the doctor overruns by 30mins. Bring back Saturday mornings and late appointments for full-time workers ONLY."

"Doctors are good if you can see them, but it seems the only time they fit you in is if it's for the kids. You have to pretend it's an emergency to get in on the same day."

"Told to phone at 8.30am to book an appointment and can't get through. When you eventually get through you have to wait 2-4 weeks for an appointment with the GP you want. You can only talk about one problem per appointment too."

"They will always arrange a visit to a GP if it's really urgent. Their evening surgery and advanced booking is a very good idea."

"I had to call the surgery 31 times before I got through to make an appointment with my GP. This is due to having to call at 8.30am. This also made me late for work and is not at all user-friendly for people having to travel to work or drop children at school."

"I don't go a lot, but it's always difficult to make an appointment. They always tell you to 'ring tomorrow' if you want the same day appointment. Only recently have they decided to let you ring in advance."

"Waiting times can be bad but that's understandable. Big sign outside welcoming new patients but they're too busy with current patients to fit new patients in."

"I have not found the Doctor First service very helpful for my own health or my husband's. Continuity of care is poor and they do not seem to have time to follow up patients. It seems overcrowded and you never see the same doctor twice, so you have to explain things over and over again."

"Surgery is okay, but you have to go through a receptionist first who isn't medically qualified, I don't want to give private details of symptoms over the phone."

"Attitude of staff is good, but the phone-in system puts pressure on doctors. When phoning in I explained to them that I didn't want to end up at A+E again and they responded accordingly."

"I cannot now see my doctor without first having a telephone consultation. If I want to speak to the doctor I should be able to do it face to face. If you have a busy work schedule a telephone consultation prior to asking to see the doctor can also be inconvenient."

"Okay overall, but waiting times can be long and I have difficulty getting an appointment. Also had a bad experience with poor staff attitude when I was unable to see my choice of GP. Looking to change GP surgery."

"Good online service. Ordering prescriptions and booking appointments online works well and we can usually be seen within less than a day."

"Getting an appointment is usually difficult as they do not want to pre-book and you have to phone up on the day. When you work and have to wait for a phone back from the doctor, this is a problem. As I only see the doctor when it is urgent I find myself having to go to the out of hours doctors - which shouldn't happen."


"Good access to GP appointments, however sometimes difficult to book an appointment with a nurse. You can phone up and set an appointment on the same day. You may have to wait to see a specific Doctor though."


Summary

The Torbay public we have engaged with have established booking systems in GP surgeries as one of their main issues, with most reviewers finding booking appointments very difficult and confusing, and some even saying that due to this they are feeling the need to use services like A & E and the Out of Hours Doctors service more and more.

Many are even saying that waiting times and high demand is understandable given the current climate of the health sector and that the service they receive once they have booked an appointment is very good. We have received positive feedback around improved online services and the implementation of advanced bookings for non-urgent issues and also evening/weekend surgeries.

Recommendations

 An optimal GP Appointment booking system is hard to define, however, there seems to be a need for all Torbay GP surgeries to adopt a uniformed approach to booking systems (including online services, advanced booking, evening/weekend surgeries) and ensuring that this is communicated to patients effectively.

 A broader investigation is required to better understand the issues faced by both patients and GP Surgeries in order to effectively cope with the increasing demand to see a GP.

*Thank you to everyone who helped contribute to this report, particularly Torbay GP Surgeries for their cooperation.
For further information; please call, visit us online, or meet us in person at Paignton Library.*

Healthwatch Torbay is the ONLY independent consumer champion for health and social care in Torbay, South Devon.

Health & social care providers have to consult with - and be influenced by - their local community in order to develop and improve the services they provide.

YOU can directly influence these services by letting us know how they are performing via your own experiences.

Whether positive or negative, let us know and we will pass all feedback on to the actual decision-makers in charge. By law they have to listen to us and respond to our feedback or recommendations.

So please get in touch today and share your story with us.

Call, email, visit us in person, or take a look at our website; where you can publicly rate & review a service anonymously at the click of a button.

Together, we can really make a difference.



healthwatch
Torbay

Room 17

Paignton Library & Information Centre
Great Western Road
Paignton, TQ4 5AG

Public office opening hours:

Monday - Thursday 10am - 3pm

Friday 9.30am - 12pm



FREEPHONE 08000 520 029

www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1153450

