

Whipps Cross Hospital Outpatients Outreach Report
September to November 2015

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Introduction

Background and purpose

Healthwatch Waltham Forest is consistently hearing from patients about with issues around outpatient services such as; patient transport, incorrect appointment letters, postponed appointments and other issues relating to outpatients. In response to this Healthwatch Waltham Forest decided to undertake an outreach programme in order to better understand patient experiences of Outpatient Services at Whipps Cross Hospital.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest had agreed with the outpatient management team. In doing so, we supplied Whipps Cross Hospital with patient experience data, which they could use in the CQC improvement plans for the department.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest were especially interested to hear experiences about;

- Making appointments (how easy/difficult was it to make an appointment)
- Waiting List (how long was your appointment after referral)
- Appointment letters and other communications (was the information provided helpful and accurate, were you able to get in touch when needed)
- Appointment cancellations or changes (were there any hold ups, how easy/difficult was it to communicate around these)
- Waiting Times (how long did you wait before being seen)
- Patient Transport or other travel (how did you find the journey)
- Patient files (availability of records and test results)
- Follow up treatment/arrangements
- Customer Service (how were you treated by the staff)
- Information (did you get all the information you needed)

All comments were taken anonymously, so no individuals were named, the intention is to share good practice and help make improvements where these are needed.

Approach

When we started this activity Whipps Cross Hospital did not have a site map for outpatients or a comprehensive outpatient's clinic timetable. The Outpatients Management Team responded to all our resource requests, clinic details and a tour of the waiting areas for volunteers. We would like to thank colleagues at Whipps Cross Hospital for their co-operation. Thanks to the local volunteers who undertook the outreach interviews.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest (HWWF) had a team of 10 volunteers recruited and trained to complete the outreach work between September and November 2015. Volunteers wore a Healthwatch branded ID badge and had clipboards to carry the necessary paperwork. The paperwork included a supply of comment cards, a prompt sheet (Appendix 4), leaflets on the complaints process and a leaflet on the goals of Healthwatch. In order to engage and inform stakeholders Healthwatch

Waltham Forest wrote a staff briefing document (Appendix 3) which was circulated to the entire outpatients department by Lynn Potter. A volunteer briefing document (Appendix 2) which was talked through at the training session, was circulated by email and provided with the outreach kit.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest carried out 15 outreach sessions across Whipps Cross Hospital outpatient clinics, excluding paediatrics. We asked patients, their friends and relatives in the waiting area about their experiences as listed above. People were invited to talk to us about any aspect of their care. A set survey was not conducted instead we used a generic comment card along with a prompt sheet (Appendix 4). The prompt sheet was used to assist volunteers to stay on topic and for respondents to understand who Healthwatch Waltham Forest are and what we were interested in hearing about.

All comments are entered into the 'Patient Experience' section of our database. The raw data is not shared with any second parties. This data is then coded by our Patient Experience Panel using an agree matrix that identifies various issues within the comments shared. This analysis generates trends and reports, as well as being able to see the comments. The findings are presented in this report.

A small display and comments box was set up in the main outpatients reception area when we were present. The outreach team roamed the waiting areas speaking to patients, carers and their families. The Whipps Cross Outpatients Team remained actively engaged in the project, were welcoming and supportive of volunteers. We were able to leave the outreach kit in the outpatients back office. This made it very easy for HWWF staff to replenish the equipment and collect completed comments without the need for volunteers to transport the kit to and from the site. It ensured security of the data as it was never unattended and was stored behind a locked/key coded door.

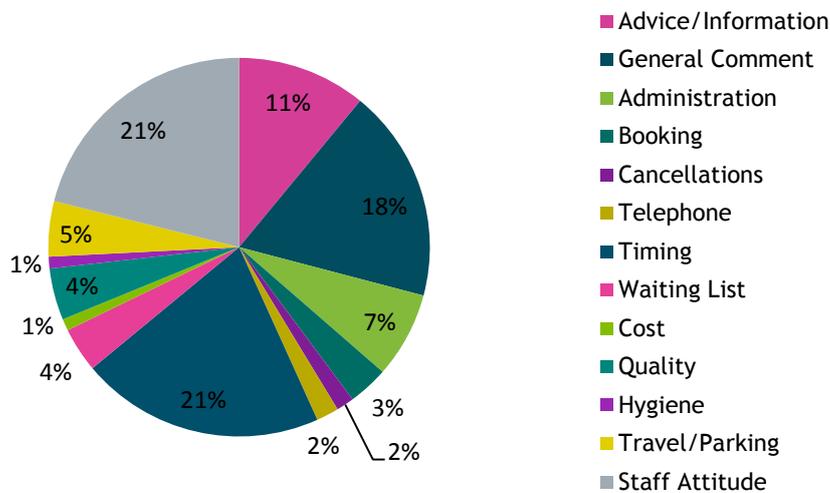
The trends within this report are based on service user comments collected Healthwatch Waltham Forest (Appendix 1). Comments obtained from these sources may not be representative of all service user experiences or opinions. The outreach team roamed the waiting areas on various days of the week and times. This staggered approach means we do not have a record of what clinics were visited. The variety in our outreach days means that the team covered the following clinics; Oral, Gastroenterology, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Renal, Dermatology, Eyes, Rheumatology, Chest, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT), Diabetes, Gynaecology, General Surgery, Fracture/Orthopaedics, Pain, Urology, Colorectal, Haematology, Neurology, Stroke.

Summary and Key findings

We collected an average of 30 comment cards per visit. This resulted in us collecting 1,077 issues from patients, relatives and carers. The outpatients department was an excellent location in order to discuss the experience of health services. Our findings are broadly about the use of Whipps Cross Hospital.

Most of the comments collected were on the topic of orthopedics. Of which 145 issues raised were positive and 110 were negative.

Chart 1 top overall trends - pie chart shows percentage breakdown of how often people talked about each pathway in outpatients department



Time spent waiting is the most talked about issue by general comments. According to the comments, the overall sentiment as a whole is 58% positive and 38% being negative and the remaining 4% are neutral comments.

Chart 2 top overall trends - breakdown of positive vs. negative comments on pathways and outpatient departments

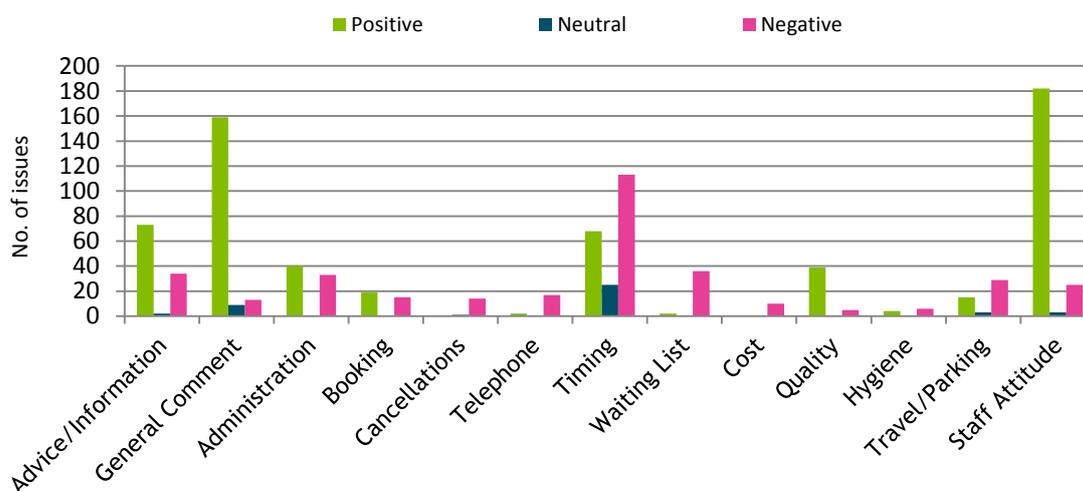


Chart 3: breakdown of positive and negative comments per outpatients department

Outpatients clinic	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Orthopaedics	29	0	27
General Outpatients	22	2	18
Ear, Nose and Throat	18	1	14
Urology	37	3	14
Ophthalmology	22	0	12
Rheumatology	27	0	10
Gastroenterology	64	4	39
Physiotherapy	145	18	110
Haematology	83	6	57

Comments suggest patients are clearly satisfied with Staff Attitude, and the Quality of treatment received. Healthwatch Waltham Forest may conclude that the service received is of good quality, but capacity is an issue that is causing long waiting times for outpatients. Largely people are happy with a local service and the comments are in favour of raising standards further.

The findings in response to our prompts are as follows;

🟢 Making appointments

People talked to us about their frustrations with the referral process in order to access outpatients appointments initially. Those patients who are returning to follow up with treatments talk more about their changes to appointments once they are made. They experience difficulties in trying to change appointments that they are no longer able to attend.

Waiting List

Comments on Waiting Lists for treatment is clearly negative, and marginally so on the Timings (or length of wait) at appointments.

Appointment letters and other communications

When there were administration errors that caused patients to miss their appointments or tests, patients were disappointed to find that they need to be referred by their GP in order to rearrange their appointment. The added difficulty in securing a GP appointment causes delays in them being seen again at Outpatients.

Appointment cancellations or changes

People talked about mistakes in correspondence such as; arriving to find the clinic is cancelled, and finding it confusing to navigate the site. All these scenarios lead to patients failing to attend the correct appointments or being on time.

Waiting Times

This means waiting at their appointment. 55% of the comments about waiting at the appointment were negative. Many comments are complaints about waits of over 20 minutes after their scheduled appointment time. Although this seems to be within Whipps Cross expectations of being seen within 30 minutes of their scheduled appointment time. Patients expect to be seen at 2pm if their appointment is booked for 2pm.

Patient Transport or other travel

53% of the comments around patient transport were negative, 38% were positive and 9% were neutral. Feelings were also broadly negative on the ability to park. People who were able to travel by bus seem happy with their journeys.

Patient files

Patients talked to us about arriving at consultations without the appropriate tests being done before, or arriving at the consultation to discuss test results when the results have not been provided to the patient or clinician in time to do so.

Follow up treatment/arrangements

We had a limited amount of information from people about their clinical experiences. As above they had problems with administration in relation to follow up.

Customer Service

Telephone access came up in only a small percentage of comments. This is the main point of contact patients have to inform the hospital if they cannot attend.

Whipps Cross have committed to calls being answered Waltham Forest within 60 seconds and installed a new system. This suggests that the new system may be working.

Patients regularly mention that even when there are errors, such as incorrect appointment instructions, staff attitude was good. They said that staff were friendly in assisting them to resolve the issue. Patients know that reception staff in outpatients are not administrating the appointments or able to rearrange appointments as referrals need to be made by clinicians.

Information

Patients were broadly positive about Advice/Information provided. We have made recommendations related to quality of information that would address patient expectations. Does the ophthalmology department know if patients need large print correspondence? As of November 2015, there is new signage outlining the days clinics and which waiting area patients should go to.

The following quotes are taken from **Appendix 1**. We have chosen the following selection as they are practical suggestions from patients, relatives and carers to improve the experience of outpatients services;

Ear, Nose and Throat

“Hearing Aid Clinic - Not seen due to no longer being on the system. Now has to go back to GP to be referred again.”

“This is my second appt. I previously went to Silverthorne/Chingford. I need my ears de waxing. I have had this problem for years. Whipps X seem to do the job ok. Last time I came the people at reception desk were chatting and kept me waiting - but today the girl has been lovely. Came on the bus. Appointments come by letter and 2 reminder emails/texts. Happy with my service.”

Gastroenterology

“18 months. Have been coming to OP a lot!!! Called in for the wrong op. Told I needed urgent surgery in Jan' 15. Surgery finally carried out this August '15. Still in considerable pain. Need to know why - has something gone wrong? No continuity of doctor. Got a letter for appt. today but sent to wrong area by the letter. Wasted over an hour in this dept - last time I came. MOSTLY ADMIN ERRORS - nurses are fine - doctors have been dismissive. Hoping to get answers about my condition today and any further treatment.”

General Outpatients

“Breast clinic - Came by bus - was easy. Reception was polite + had my details. It was hard to find "Area 1" as when we got here it just said 'bloods' so we thought it was just for blood tests so we went to Area A/B + asked them. They sent us back to "Area 1". Area 1 needs better signposting for the 'clinic' as well as 'Bloods'.”

“Mix up with appointment date. Sent home without being seen. Staff were very friendly + helpful. - would have preferred to be notified about cancelled clinic in advance. New appointment generated within one week - was a good clinic service in the end.”

Haematology

“This is my 3rd year of coming here. My blood is too thick. I am on medication so I come here every 6 months for a check up. The doctors seem happy with my progress. Usually I get seen quite quickly and the staff are always helpful. I drove myself here - got a space easily today - NOT ALWAYS.”

Ophthalmology

“Appt was 11 am. Waited 20 min then at pharmacy at 1.45 waited for new prescription. Only since Barts took over can we not get prescription from chemist. Now only at Pharmacy at Whipps WHY? Notice saying short of staff wait is up to an hour only 2 people in queue.”

“Appointment - good. Cancelling v. difficult to get through on phone. Communication - good. Waiting times normally good. Taxi - in front. Files and records no problem. Follow up treatment good. Customer service good. Information good but reading it a problem. Rescheduling difficult. Can't get through to the department.”

“Sent for examination. Need cataract surgery. Still waiting for report so I can book the surgery. GP states he has asked for referral but nothing has happened to date.”

Orthopaedics

“Seen early for appt. all Doctors and Nurses very helpful and informative. Hospital clean, bright, welcoming. Parking always a problem, have a broken leg so need to look near OPD. Very Satisfied.”

“Appointment sent, a few days before my appointment. I received a text message reminder. As this is my second appointment the service has been good and seen at the right time. Staff have been helpful.”

“Main complaint; client in wx cos leg in plaster. Has to wait to be wheeled from Dept to Dept. Lack of coordination. Transport arrived 1 hour before appt, picked others up, eventually arrived 15 mins late for appt in clinic. Has been waiting for transport home for 15 min at present. Staff very polite and treat you with respect. Docs spoke and explained everything asked to come back in 3 weeks BUT no appt available before 4 weeks - no explanation.”

Physiotherapy

“Appointment from GP. Waiting 3 weeks. Letters and communication - good everything was explained. By car family. Files and records - good no follow up

treatment. Customer service very good. Information and explanation very good. Suggestion: on the dementia file put a marker.”

“Arrived 11.20 for 11.30 appointment. Seen by trainee. Waited over 1 hour for porter due to change in procedure not known at office. No notes available regarding required exercises.”

Rheumatology

“Since 50 years ago. Usually not long waiting times here. Staff are always very helpful and pleasant. Not sure who I am seeing today but they know me well. I came in usually every 6/8 months to check the medication is working. I came by car - I was lucky today but not always. My personal experience at Whipps X has been most satisfactory. I don't like to hear the canned music here.”

“Been coming a year. Once or twice I have had to wait but usually it's ok. I always ask Doctor questions & get answers. I have no complaints; I have been very lucky here. I shall be moving soon & I'm dreading going to another hospital. It's a brilliant team here. Came by bus.”

Urology

“I am under investigation for possible cancer of the prostate. I first went to the GP in March and was referred. My blood test showed a reduction in the indicators but not to level of 4. After monitoring my condition the consultant decided to arrange a biopsy and I have come to get the results today. I am very happy with the service I have received as everything has been explained to me. I do not know the outcome of the tests as I write this but hope that whatever the outcome the service remains as good.”

“Really, really, disgusted with service. Waiting and deferring to different consultants. Then being thrown backwards/ forwards between GP & Consultant. Lost notes in hospital and re-scheduling apps longer than 4-6 weeks or nothing heard. When chasing up no record - blamed on computer services. When you try to complain they say refer back to your GP. Process has to restart again causes major delays but NO ACTION!”

Recommendations

Whipps Cross Hospital has already outlined an extensive action plan for outpatients as part of their CQC improvement plan. Where possible we have linked the recommendations to the Whipps Cross Hospital CQC improvement plan. At the time of this outreach activity not all of the milestones had been completed.

1. Manage patient expectations more effectively. This could be potentially done by explaining there could be waits of up to 30 minutes in the appointment letters. So, if people arrive 15 minutes early they will understand that they may not be seen until 45 minutes later.

2. Text message reminders should tell patients which waiting area to go to. Whipps Cross acknowledges “Progress to improve DNA rates is dependent on a functioning and efficient telephone and appointments booking systems.”
3. As far as Healthwatch Waltham Forest are aware there is no sitemap available on arrival at Outpatients Reception.
4. Rheumatology patients that we spoke to were very satisfied with the service and clinic treatment they received. Gastroenterology patients were notably negative about their service as a whole. We recommend that a peer learning opportunity enables the higher performing departments to mentor the lower performing departments. This should involve both clinical and administrative staff.
5. The expense of parking is a reoccurring issue across all patient groups. Parking costs could be explained in the appointment letter in order to manage expectations.
6. Improve the accessibility of information. An ophthalmology patient said their letter was difficult to read. Another said that the files should flag if a patient has dementia. To be compliant with the Accessible Information Standard each record should say, if not already, which patients require accessible information.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest hope that the recommendations go some way to influencing the practical measures put in place to improve quality of service to outpatients.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest would like to return to the Outpatients department to test if the improvements in the future. This activity could be carried out in partnership with the Whipps Cross Patients Panel and be well advertised so to attract new volunteers for both organisations. We welcome Barts Health to approach us when they have a clear idea of which areas of improvement they would like to test.

We would appreciate a response from the Outpatients Management Team to our recommendations by the 22nd April 2016.

Appendix

Appendix 1 - Source comments (raw data)

Appendix 2 - Volunteer Brief

Appendix 3 - Whipps Cross Staff Brief

Appendix 4 - Outreach Prompt Sheet

END.