

# St James Medical Practice Limited

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Healthwatch Waltham Forest  
GP Outreach Research 2014: Individual Practice Report

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## Executive Summary and Recommendations

This report is a summary of the comments made by patients we met over a period of six weeks at the St James Medical Practice. This was part of a wider project visiting four surgeries in Walthamstow and Leytonstone to find out what patients think works well at their GP surgery and what could be improved.

We spoke to 159 patients using the surgery over the six weeks. They mentioned 110 positive aspects of the service at the St James Medical Practice and 185 aspects that could be improved. These were issues familiar to us from previous work on GP access: patients want to be able to see their GP when they need to, have a minimal wait at their appointment and receive good care from their GP.

The most frequent issue raised was the state of the building the surgery is based in. This is owned by NHS Property Services, so maintenance and renovation are not within the immediate control of the surgery and thus not a focus of this report.

Recommendations, based on what the patients told us, have been made for ways to improve appointment issues, patient information, physical/signage aspects and staff issues.

### The main recommendations

1. All options for appointment booking need to be advertised to patients
2. Install flexible barriers and clear signage so patients waiting to speak to reception staff form a single queue
3. Display information about current waiting times at appointments so that patients are kept informed
4. Try and accommodate patients running late as much as possible
5. Improve the signage to help new or infrequent visitors to locate their consultation room easily
6. Provide reception staff with ongoing customer service training and gather regular feedback from patients on their performance
7. Review the practice charter regularly so that it remains relevant to all
8. Display prominent notices with contact details for building maintenance issues
9. Display and otherwise communicate with all patients about planned improvement works



## Introduction

In 2013 Healthwatch Waltham Forest conducted research on local GP access issues by inviting people across the borough to complete a short survey<sup>1</sup>. Through this piece of work we spoke to approximately 400 people, but also met many who had not been to the GP recently and so did not feel qualified to complete the survey. This year we decided to visit GP surgeries and talk directly with their patients.

We approached all the surgeries in Walthamstow, Leytonstone and Leyton - forty-five in total - four of which agreed to let us visit their surgery. We made arrangements to visit all four surgeries once a week over a period of six weeks to speak to the patients attending the surgery on that day. The aim was to find out what patients think works well at their surgery and what can be improved. At the request of two surgeries, we tested the Friends and Family Test (FFT) question, by including it in a short survey which also asked what works well and what could be improved. At the other two surgeries we used comment cards to gather feedback, and invited patients in person to comment on what was good and what could be improved at the surgery. In all four surgeries we displayed posters advertising our visit and offering prompts about aspects of the service patients might like to comment on. These prompts were based on what people had told us as part of the GP Access research Healthwatch Waltham Forest conducted in 2013.

Each practice has been issued with an individual report containing the feedback at their surgery, with recommendations for change based on what patients told us. There is also an overall report summarising all the feedback from all the surgeries.

We would like to thank Adrian Dodd, Healthwatch volunteer, for working on this project with us, attending the surgery and speaking to the patients. We greatly appreciate his help, without which this project could not have been completed. We would also like to thank the staff at St James Medical Practice, who made us welcome, and the patients who answered our questions.

## What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch Waltham Forest is a local Healthwatch organisation, established by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to act as the local independent consumer champion for health and social care.

Local Healthwatch organisations have statutory duties to:

- Gather the views and experiences of patients and the public.
- Make those views known to providers and commissioners.
- Promote and support the involvement of local people in the commissioning and provision of local care services and how they are scrutinised.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.healthwatchwalthamforest.co.uk/sites/default/files/healthwatch\\_waltham\\_forest\\_-\\_gp\\_report\\_0\\_0.pdf](http://www.healthwatchwalthamforest.co.uk/sites/default/files/healthwatch_waltham_forest_-_gp_report_0_0.pdf)

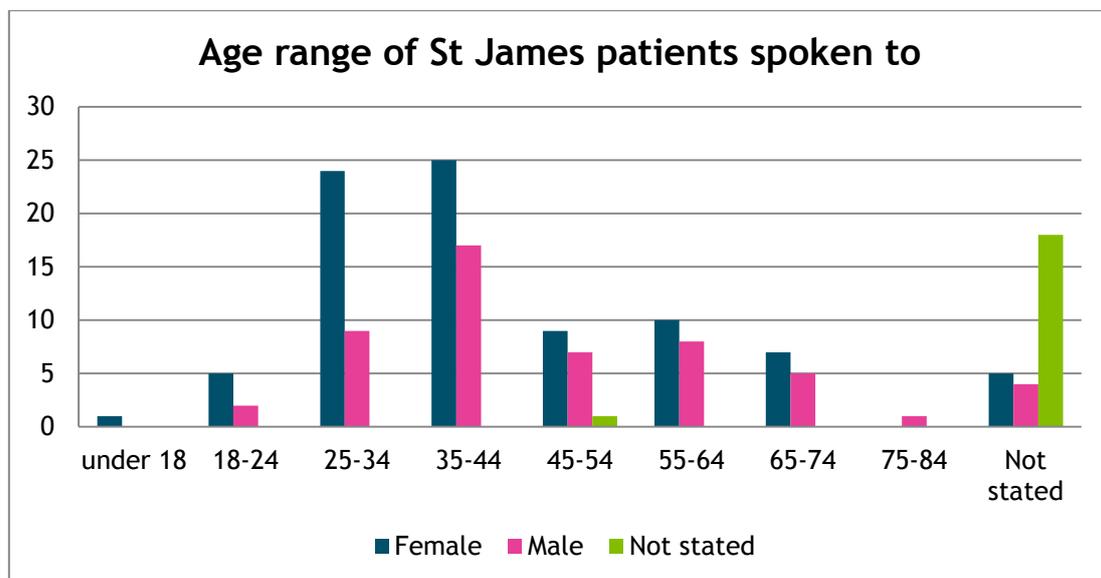
- Recommend investigation or special review of services via Healthwatch England or directly to the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- Provide information and signposting about access to services and support for making informed choices including independent advocacy support to make an NHS complaint.
- Make the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England, providing a steer to help it carry out its role as national champion.

## Information about St James Medical Practice

The St James Medical Practice is a multi doctor GP surgery in Walthamstow with a patient list of approximately 11,800. We visited on Monday mornings between 15<sup>th</sup> September and 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014. The building the surgery is based in is owned and managed by NHS Property Services<sup>2</sup>. It is also used by a busy phlebotomy clinic and midwifery services on a Monday, and we were keen to collect feedback from all users of the building while we were there. We used comment cards to gather feedback on what works well at the GP surgery and what could be improved. We also invited the phlebotomy and midwifery clinic patients to tell us about their experiences of the service they were using. This report only includes comments about the St James Medical Practice services.

We spoke to 159 St James Medical Practice patients over the six visits. This compares favourably with the 116 patients that responded to the latest national GP Patient Satisfaction survey, not all of whom completed the full survey<sup>3</sup>.

Some patients chose not to complete the monitoring information requested, so we do not have a complete profile of those we spoke to. Of those that did, a summary is included below. We spoke to patients across all age groups and we spoke to more women than men.

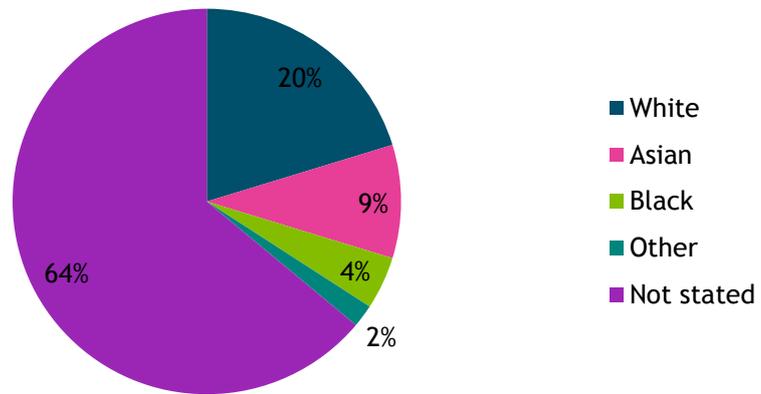


Whilst most people were comfortable sharing their gender and age, 64% of those we spoke to did not include their ethnicity on their comment card, so we do not have sufficient data to present a statistically relevant overview by ethnicity.

<sup>2</sup> <http://our.property.nhs.uk/index.php?id=115&property=4103>

<sup>3</sup> <https://gp-patient.co.uk/practices/F86058>

### Ethnicity of St James patients spoken to



## What people told us about the St James Medical Practice

All patients we spoke to were invited to say what they like about the surgery, what works well and also what could be improved. There were Healthwatch posters on the wall with suggestions of aspects of the service they might like to comment on, including appointment booking, reception staff, waiting times, the GP, treatment and referrals. These were all issues raised during our 2013 GP outreach project. The comments in this report reflect what the patients we met on our six visits told us; they are not necessarily reflective of all patient experience at the surgery. A copy of all comments is included in Appendix 1.

### What is good about this GP surgery - what works well?

There were 110 positive comments made about St James, with some patients commenting on several aspects of the service. The comments can be categorised as follows:

| Subject                | Works well |
|------------------------|------------|
| Generally positive     | 34         |
| Staff                  | 30         |
| Appointments           | 14         |
| Good care              | 13         |
| Communication          | 4          |
| Emergency appointments | 4          |
| Phone issues           | 3          |
| Premises               | 3          |
| Waiting times          | 3          |
| Location               | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>110</b> |

### *Generally positive*

Many patients we spoke to were generally positive about St James, but did not specify what aspects of the service they found particularly good. They said there was a “good service, good doctors” or “I get good overall service. I have no real complaints” and “GP services is good. I am happy with it.” One patient said it had improved: “St James St has come a long way within the past year.”

### *Staff*

Thirty patients mentioned staff positively. The receptionists were praised: “I find [their staff] helpful, [e]specially reception department”, “very pleasant receptionists”, “very good service, polite reception” and “receptionists are usually friendly and helpful”. More generally the staff were described as “very polite”, “friendly and helpful” and “very helpful and patient”.

Again patients highlighted recent improvements in staff attitude: “staff seem to be more polite in their approach at the moment as before [they] had attitude

problems”, “the receptionist team today is better than before” and “the receptionists are much more helpful and efficient than they used to be”.

### *Appointments*

Fourteen patients mentioned the appointment system as a positive: “booking an appointment was easy”. One likes being able to get a same day appointment: “I was able to be seen only two hours after calling”. Another said calling early was the key to success: “If I ring first thing in the morning I can nearly always get an appointment that day.”

### *Good care*

Good care was mentioned by several patients we spoke to. Some were very general: “Dr R is my doctor and very nice.” Others specified what they appreciated: “my GP takes a great proactive approach to health care” and “Dr Khan v. quick to diagnose cancer and follow up treatment”.

Some did say the service they receive is variable according to the doctor: “Some GPs I have seen have been v good”. One example of variable good care was offered: “Prescribed drug. Mr Kavar stopped the use due to side effects and banned future use. Different Dr in practice prescribed same drug even after being made aware of the ban. Dr may have been a locum.”

One example of good care from other staff was also mentioned, although the patient was surprised, and pleased, to receive such good service: “My daughter suffers with asthma and the school informed me that her inhaler was out of date, so I came straight to the surgery to try and get a new one the same day. To my surprise the reception staff arranged for me to pick one up within the hour.”

### *Communication*

Four patients we spoke to mentioned good communication from St James. One had “good follow-up calls and texts” about their appointment. Others described good communication, where “doctors are always courteous and respectful” and reception staff are “polite and helpful” too.

### *Emergency appointments*

Four patients mentioned the ease of getting an emergency appointment at St James: “I wanted the emergency appointment [so] phoned them, they gave me [an] appointment straight away”, they are “very good with dealing with emergencies” and one patient feels that “It's not easy to book an appointment unless it's an urgent one.”

### *Phone issues*

Three patients mentioned positive experiences when phoning the surgery. One said it had improved: “got much better recently with telephone answering”, another highlighted the “fast response on calls” and a third recognised that the phone lines are busy so uses an alternative booking method: “It is a very busy

health centre and they can't answer the phone to take appointments so I take a walk [to the practice] to make my appointments.”

### *Premises*

By far the most comments we received about the premises were negative, but three patients had positive things to say about the building: “I've been registered before in numerous practices around London and this one certainly seems one of the best organised and laid out.” Two patients commented on the cleanliness: “waiting room was clean and quiet” and “area is clean and safe”.

### *Wait times*

Three patients were complimentary about waiting times at St James: “Fantastic, always on time”, “the appointments are always on schedule and “not such a long wait - surprised not very busy”.

### *Location*

We met several newly-registered patients who had chosen St James for its convenient location: “made choice to come here as very convenient”, although one patient did say they would like to see parking provision.

### How could this GP surgery be improved - what would make it better?

There were 185 comments made about how St James could be improved, categorised as follows.

| Subject                | No. of suggestions for Improvement |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Appointments           | 42                                 |
| Waiting times          | 30                                 |
| Good care              | 23                                 |
| Premises               | 22                                 |
| Communication          | 16                                 |
| Phone issues           | 14                                 |
| Staff                  | 11                                 |
| Continuity of care     | 9                                  |
| Emergency appointments | 6                                  |
| Opening times          | 5                                  |
| Services               | 4                                  |
| Referrals              | 2                                  |
| Location               | 1                                  |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>185</b>                         |

#### *Appointments*

The issues with appointments fall in to three categories: the difficulty of getting one at all, the long wait for the appointment and the booking system used. Essentially “it is not easy to make an appointment”.

The ease of making an appointment could be improved by making contact by phone easier: “making an appointment is difficult, can wait a long time on phone”. At least one patient finds it more likely they’ll get an appointment if they come to the surgery in person, bypassing the phones, although sometimes they feel too ill to countenance this: “I rang 48 times this morning for an appointment. Engaged constantly, I came to the surgery in person to get an appointment, surgery was deserted at 8.10 except for 2 members of staff answering phone on desks. I should have made appointment on Friday (bad chest) but couldn't face trial of coming down. Now off sick from work. How many days are lost because patients can't make an appointment to see the doctor?”

One parent finds it easier to get child appointments than their own: “good when trying to fit in appointments for small children. Not so great for adults as seem oversubscribed”. However, another parent did not have that same experience, particularly with urgent issues: “The appointment system is inflexible. In the case of emergency the patient has to turn up at the surgery and wait until all the other

patients are seen. This is unworkable and in most cases inappropriate. In the case of young children you have to go to A&E.” Yet another patient finds it “easy to get an emergency appointment, but long wait for routine ones”. These comments demonstrate patients are having different experiences of the same system.

The wait for the appointment date was also an issue raised by patients. They felt two weeks was too long to wait for a routine appointment: “I find the service at St James quite good, although one has to wait even two weeks for an appointment.” They questioned whether the appointment would still be necessary after that wait: “it's not easy to book an appointment unless it's an urgent one. The waiting time is not sensible at all. If patients have to wait 2 weeks to be seen by a doctor, why bother?” Another patient was disappointed that “sometimes they can't give us an appointment on same day”.

The new booking system, which was introduced last year, requires patients to call at 8am and 2pm to book an appointment. This system was criticised by several patients. The set times mean phone lines are busy: “90 times out of 100 the appointments are not available. We have to ring at 8am and 2pm when we do the phone lines are always busy. This service is really poor and [I'm] really disappointed. All we hope [is] that we could book emergency appointment and general check-up separately as before.”

Several dislike the system: “booking system is inadequate, only books for current week”. One feels it encourages patients to exaggerate the seriousness of their illness: “The system of having appointments only 3 weeks in advance or ‘emergencies’ on the day seems ill thought out. It presumes there are only 2 types of illness: the long-term mild and the urgent/serious. It only serves to encourage people to exaggerate to be seen and I assume places strain upon receptionists.” One patient summed up the issues: “The system of making appointments is almost prohibitive of helping patients. Times and booking need practical attention.”

Two patients mentioned working people. One feels they should be given priority or specific slots to fit in around their work commitments: “priority should be given to people who go to work to be able to book an appointment when they are off duty”. Another would like “this new appointment system ‘on the same day’ reversed and brought back to booking appointment in advance if possible, especially for patients who work”.

Two patients mentioned the call-back appointment system with the GP as “variable”. One found setting it up problematic: “The issue of phoning in the surgery to get an appointment to speak to a GP is very frustrating as it is difficult to get through”, and the other prefers a face-to-face appointment “call back appointments with doctors is a bit of a nightmare - easier to get a proper appointment”.

### *Waiting times*

Thirty patients commented on waiting times at St James. One patient said a long wait was usual: “waiting long time to be seen and it’s not only this time - every time you have to wait” and another agreed: “the surgery is always running late, never respect the time of appointments”. This was an issue for workers: “appointments are always running late which is not great when you have to get to work”. Another would appreciate knowing how long the wait is likely to be so they can plan accordingly: “The waiting time is always too long. There should be a notice to warn patients if the services are running late so they know what to do i.e. postpone their appointment after [the] GP etc.”

Several patients gave specific details of their wait: “an appointment they gave as time 10.10am, we came at 9.50am and now 10.31am, still waiting for the Dr to be seen. Too long to wait with so much pain in the back”, “I don’t like the waiting time for my appointments as sometimes I have to wait 20 minutes”, “the reception desk are polite and always ready for help. Only one problem is time waiting to see the Dr, sometimes take 1 hour” and “the waiting time can be frustrating because they are running late most of the time. I have waited up to an hour”.

One patient pointed out the unfairness of being made to wait but being penalised if they were late for the appointment: “you may get an appointment for 12.40 and not be seen until after 1pm but if you are even 5 minutes late the Dr will not see you”. Another patient had a similar experience with a nurse’s appointment: “I came for nurse’s appointment on 24/9 on time and was told the nurse was not here so they made another appointment for me on 3/10. I came 10 minutes late I was turned away because of being 10 minutes late and they made another appointment. I came in on time and now it is 8.30am and no sign of something, come on, call me, somebody call me...It is 9.30am, not too bad. The service is not good at all.”

### *Good care*

The comments about the lack of good care patients had experienced covered not feeling that the care was appropriate or sufficient, or feeling that the doctor does not listen to the patient.

We heard several examples where the doctor had missed symptoms, or prescribed inappropriate medication: “GPs are not seen to be very interested in their services. During my partner’s pregnancy one of the GPs prescribed the wrong medicine which [she] was not meant to be taking while she was pregnant.” Another patient said her “doctor missed signs of labour, no examination. I went into labour at 26 weeks with twins, one is still in hospital.” Someone else spoke about their relative: “I think they do not have too much care when you come and complain about some pain. The reason I’m saying this is because my sister was complaining about pain for 2 weeks. When we decided go to the hospital she had urgent surgery.”

Patients complained that they don't feel listened to when they see the doctor and don't receive timely care as a consequence. Two patients said they have come to the surgery multiple times before an issue is dealt with to their satisfaction. "[there is] only one GP here I would feel confident seeing as I've had inadequate care from other. Often I have to return 2 or 3 times to get something dealt with properly. My son and husband have had the same problem."

In one case the medication was not effective: "I feel that I have been given conflicting information from a few of the GPs here which ultimately has prolonged my illness. In particular I feel I wasn't actually being listened to in one instance and I was prescribed almost redundant meds in regards to my problem because the GP didn't believe me." A third patient felt, despite several visits, they were not dealt with as they had expected: "I am not happy at all about GPs services. I have been 3 times to the GP with really bad pain on my back and they don't give me anything - just advise me to do exercise."

Others patients said they were not prescribed medication, but told to take over-the-counter painkillers instead: "There is some problem with medication. If the patient has knee pain they give us only Paracetamol, not a specific medication" and "the doctor will see you at the end and will tell you to take Paracetamol - doesn't matter what [problem] you're having". Another patient felt they were not prescribed suitable medication: "I am concerned that, as someone who pays for my prescriptions, GPs are now prescribing meds that are ineffective. On several occasions I have had to return to the surgery with the same symptoms and have had to request that the meds offered will be 'fit for purpose'".

This mismatch between patient expectation of the service and patient responsibility/self-help is an issue that may need addressing more widely across the health sector.

Two patients mentioned feeling that the care they receive is perfunctory: "Doctors just listen to top feeling and don't try to get to root of disease or problem" and "Drs seem to want you in and out quickly."

### *Premises*

We had twenty-three patients' comment on the building as an area for improvement. One patient had been expecting improvement for years and identified several aspects that need improving: "When I registered at the practice in 2007 I was told that the building was to be re-built in 2 years. 7 year later the same building is in a terrible state and needs maintenance and re-building. It appears dirty and unhygienic. The reception is always blocked; it is hard to know where to queue. Also there is nothing to entertain children while waiting." Another said the "surgery building is very depressing".

Patients agreed that the "building and toilets need revamping", "this building is filthy and needs refurbishing" and "I am pleased with the service, however the

building needs modernising.” One issue was the toilets: “toilets and place need to be repaired because are not in good condition”, “ladies toilet is awful” and “toilets need cleaning more often and checks on soap”. While one patient commended the surgery for replacing the waiting room chairs: “really glad replaced the awful old ripped chairs”, another said “the waiting environment is always unpleasant. It is noisy and overcrowded.”

One patient said the “surgery itself is a very unpleasant building and environment”. Another pointed out: “Alcohol gel dispenser not working, makes registering your arrival unhealthy as you don't know what disease the last person to touch the screen has.” Another found the “machine not working to check in, so waiting in reception queue”. One patient suggested the building “needs air condition[ing]”, and a mother pointed out the state of the premises was impacting on services: “Heater does not work any more at the surgery so the baby clinic was shifted to Mission Grove.”

One patient said the surgery was being let down by its poor premises: “The St James Street surgery has good doctors but seriously needs a new building.”

### *Communication*

Complaints about poor communication were made by sixteen patients. These included several examples of a poor communication manner from reception staff: “the receptionist was not very helpful and made me feel unvalued, although did grudgingly make me an appointment”, and from doctors: “some GPs do not have great manners when dealing with you”. Another patient said: “Overall not great at explaining things and treating patient as intelligent individuals.”

Poor communication was also mentioned in regard to systems used at the surgery. One patient was not informed about test results on time and needed to chase the results: “the only thing I have an issue with is results follow-up. I have results lost or been out of date and haven't been informed till I have checked and they need to redo tests.” Recording wrong information was also raised: “failure to put correct information on file system has resulted in me returning 2 weeks later”. Patients said that they had not received notification of changes to their appointment: “they said they called me to say they changed the time which they did not”. Several patients had issues with the patient check-in machines, and so prefer to check in with reception to avoid any confusion: “Accused of being too late by reception when I pointed out I had signed in and was told I was on time.”

Two patients mentioned issues with the GP call-back appointment system: “The issue of phoning in the surgery to get an appointment to speak to a GP is very frustrating as it is difficult to get through. Also if your phone is busy when the doctor calls, you have to go through the whole process again” and “call back appointments with doctors is a bit of a nightmare”.

### *Phone issues*

Those who mentioned the phones as an area needing improvement mentioned needing to call multiple times before getting through: “I rang 48 times this morning for an appointment”, long waits on hold: “held on telephone for 14 minutes, 22 minutes, 40 minutes to get through to reception before they hung up on me” and there being no appointments left when the patient finally gets through: “The [phone] line is always busy and by the time you get an answer they tell you that it is all fully booked.” One patient also mentioned the triage by receptionists before they will issue an appointment: “When you do [get through] you are asked stupid questions.”

### *Staff*

Although thirty patients mentioned staff as a positive aspect of the service at St James, eleven thought they could be improved. One would like to see more female doctors at the practice and another found staff variable: “when willing to help, staff are great”.

The focus of the majority of observations about poor service from staff was the reception team. As this is the first point of contact for most patients, this is perhaps unsurprising. Comments included: “reception too slow”, “reception are not the most polite” and “reception staff could be a bit more helpful sometimes”.

Four described reception staff as rude, one because their preferences were not noted: “you put request for lady doctor but they put man doctor and they are very rude”, another because when calling the phone was repeatedly hung up by reception: “Not at all happy with the service provided. Reception staff are rude.” A third said: “The receptionists at this practice do not know how to talk to their patients. They have so much attitude it’s appalling.” Also, “Most of them are terribly rude; they seriously do not know how to behave with their patients in person or over the phone.”

One patient had their appointment changed and found staff unhelpful in resolving the issue: “Today I came to the surgery for my appointment. They said they called me to say they changed the time which they did not. They refuse to help so I have to sit here for 2 hours. Very unhelpful receptionists.”

### *Continuity of care*

Nine patients mentioned continuity of care, i.e. seeing the same doctor, as an area for improvement. One pointed out that the “doctors keep changing, hard to form patient/doctor relationship with the constant changes” and another agreed: “I’ve never seen the same GP twice however, which is to be expected in a busy practice, but means I do not build up any kind of patient/carer relationship.” One patient said this had impacted on their health: “you never get to see your own doctor on a regular basis. I feel increasingly anxious and let down by the level of care.”

### *Emergency appointments*

While patients praised the ease of getting an emergency appointment, others said they were not easily available: “emergency appointments should be available to people who are very sick”. The system of turning up to wait was an issue: “in the case of emergency the patient has to turn up at the surgery and wait until all the other patients are seen”. One patient mentioned the issue of being triaged by reception staff before being issued an emergency appointment: “the way in which they screen what is considered an emergency needs improving”. A mother would like more emergency appointments available: “if I phone up sometime they don't listen [to] what the problems is and just say no appointment available. I'm a mother of 4 kids so I will be needing emergency appointments.”

A parent of a baby, not yet registered at the surgery, was unable to have the child seen at all in an emergency because it was not registered: “St James St Practice is incompetent to the point of negligence. Over the last 6 months they have refused to see my 6 month old vomiting baby as it wasn't registered, causing me to burden A&E.”

### *Opening times*

Longer opening hours were mentioned by five patients. One patient compared it to their previous GP surgery: “having recently transferred from another surgery in South London, I was somewhat dismayed at the short hours/closed weekends' policy here” and two more suggested weekend opening: “weekend surgery opening would be appreciated”. One pointed out: “as a worker I would appreciate your opening on Saturday mornings just for those who cannot come on Mon-Fri. Every other thing here is perfect, workers inclusive”. The early closing on a Thursday was also questioned: “surgery closes on Thursdays, it should be open”.

### *Services*

Four patients mentioned specific services at the surgery. One did not appreciate having to pay for a necessary document: “charged £15 for letter for Diabetes Type I for air travel purposes”. One compared the surgery unfavourably to a previous surgery: “I'm used to a switched on/connected service of online booking and prescriptions in Liverpool, disappointed not to find it in London.” He also wanted to be able to see a prescribing nurse so he could manage his diabetes without needing to see a GP every time. One patient would like to see an “acupuncture and massage centre” at the surgery and another would like a more patient-centred approach: “I appreciate the service and care I receive here. However. it is yet to be holistic. It has to be radically rethought with the patient at the centre. We who use it need to take more responsibility for our own health.”

### *Referrals*

Two patients spoke about referrals, although they did not go into detail. In the experience of one “referrals sometimes don't get made” and another said “I haven't had great experiences with referrals.”



### What we observed at St James Medical Practice

Two people from Healthwatch conducted the outreach at the St James Medical Practice and we observed the following:

The surgery is based in a building owned by NHS Property Services which has been due for refurbishment for several years. The outside of the building is shabby in appearance and there is a large, imposing sign announcing that prams should be locked securely to prevent theft. The entrance to the building is not welcoming.

The surgery reception is located near the public entrance to the building and patients were often observed queuing in and around the door area, impeding entry to the building for other service users. We encountered several people who had come for blood tests and unwittingly joined the queue for the reception at St James Medical Practice, not realising that it was a different service.

There are several reception windows along a narrow corridor that has doors to the consultation rooms off one end and leads into the waiting area at the other. Several pillars block the area and cause the queue to snake around in front of the door or along the corridor, at busy times blocking the main door, the door to the consultation rooms or access to the waiting area. The corridor is poorly lit.

We arrived one morning before the reception opened and observed patients mingling in front of the window rather than forming a queue. We observed that once reception is open, newly-arrived patients tend to form one queue at the first window and when another window opens patients rush to it out of turn. We observed a man arrive at a long queue at window 1 and when window 3 opened he walked up to it ahead of others who had been waiting before his arrival and was given an emergency appointment.

The surgery waiting area is a large area, with natural light from several skylights, located in the centre of the building. All chairs were very recently replaced so are in good order. There is a central aisle allowing easy access and the chairs are arranged in rows facing the glassed-in reception area. We observed several patients trying, but failing, to attract staff attention at these windows. There is a prescription box for patients to leave forms in one window. The maternity clinic also appeared to be using one window on this side of the reception area to check in their patients.

Above the glassed-in area is an electronic noticeboard, with indicators for doctors and rooms. Patients are called to their appointment by their name being displayed along with a room number. Several consultation rooms are off to the left of the waiting area and the rest are along a corridor off the main entrance. We observed several patients, who were unfamiliar with the building, wandering around trying to find their allocated consultation room - some for more than five minutes. The signage for consultation rooms is not very prominent.

On three walls of the waiting area there are noticeboards with various notices about the GP practice and other local services on display. The notices are densely packed and some looked old and scruffy. Most were not laminated. In amongst the notices were guidance for patients, such as instructions for checking in on arrival and procedures for prescriptions. These were not very prominent as they were in amongst the other notices.

There is a check-in machine in the waiting area for patients to use on their arrival. There is a hand gel dispenser by the machine, but it was out of order on one of our visits. The check-in machine allows users to select from six languages. It does not allow a patient to check in if they are more than five minutes late. We observed one patient who had joined the queue on arrival, early for his appointment. However, by the time he spoke to a receptionist he was overdue for his appointment and had to wait to see if they could accommodate him. Another woman told us she had asked someone else to check in for her because she is dyslexic and she had been waiting more than thirty minutes. The receptionist told her she was too late and would have to wait and see if they could fit her in around other appointments.

There is one toy in the waiting room, a 30cm square box with various different activities on each side. We observed several children individually and in groups playing with the toy and components. It was moved around the waiting area as children came and went. We did not observe it being cleaned during our visits.

The waiting area had a lot of people moving through it to the phlebotomy clinic behind, and those using the clinic also stand around waiting in the surgery waiting area. We observed that there were generally always sufficient chairs for the number of patients waiting, although at times every available chair was occupied. Some people chose to stand. There is space around and in front of the chair area for pushchairs, without blocking entrance to other areas of the building.

To one side of the waiting area are men's and women's toilets. The men's is kept locked and reception staff will open it on request. The women's is open and we saw it frequently used by men who did not know how to get, or could not get the attention of staff to open the men's toilet. The women's toilet is lit by a blue light. It has two cubicles and no baby changing facility. We observed several women using the facility to collect their urine samples. We observed an older man try unsuccessfully to assist his wife, in a wheelchair, to use the toilet. He could get the wheelchair through the door, but was not able to get her into a cubicle, the widest being too narrow for the wheelchair. He tried to attract staff attention but was not able to do so. When we alerted staff they told him there was no accessible toilet on the premises.

One morning a woman was observed feeling faint and dizzy. She was waiting for the phlebotomy (blood) clinic and could not get the attention of reception staff, despite asking for assistance. We alerted them to her situation and she was attended to.

The general impression of the St James Medical Practice is of a busy surgery with lots of activity in a building no longer fit for purpose. We observed, and were told by patients, that the physical state of the building influences their perception of the service they receive.

The waiting area for the surgery is used as an overspill seating area by users of the phlebotomy clinic, which does not have sufficient seating to accommodate everyone arriving early to avoid a long wait. The provision and condition of the toilets is not managed by the surgery. but complaints about it are directed to them. Other clinics running in the building do not have a visible reception presence so surgery receptionists are approached when issues or queries arise. Patients at St James Medical Practice might be left with the impression that their surgery is over-subscribed due to the number of people in the building waiting for that and other services.

## Summary and recommendations

The patients of St James Medical Practice have varied experiences of using it. Some people understand how the systems in place work, can get an appointment when needed and know their way around the building to reach their appointment on time and in the right consultation room. Others find appointment booking onerous and the layout of the surgery unclear. New patients waste time trying to talk to receptionists at a window where they will never be seen. St James needs to improve how it communicates with all its patients.

| Issue   | Recommendation  |
|---|---|
| We did not observe notices advising patients how to book appointments online. Many dislike having to phone or visit the surgery.                                      | 1. All options for appointment booking need to be advertised to patients  |
| The reception desks are not well situated and cause a blockage at the front entrance for all users of the building.   | 2. Install flexible barriers and clear signage so patients waiting to speak to reception staff form a single queue.               |
| The waiting times on arrival for an appointment feel excessive and regularly occur for some patients. They are also unexplained.                                      | 3. Display information about current waiting times at appointments so that patients are kept informed                             |
| Patients arriving later than 5 minutes are made to rebook their appointment.  | 4. Try and accommodate patients running late as much as possible.   |
| New and infrequent patients were observed searching for their consultation room due to poor signage.  | 5. Improve the signage to assist new or infrequent visitors in locating their consultation room easily.                           |
| Communication at St James was identified as recently improved by some patients, although many still describe reception staff as “rude”.                               | 6. Provide reception staff with ongoing customer service training and gather regular feedback from patients on their performance. |
| Patient expectations differ from the reality of the service they receive. The practice charter needs to be more widely promoted and regularly reviewed for relevance. | 7. Review the practice charter regularly so that it remains relevant to all.  |
| The surgery does not have responsibility for the building maintenance, but its poor condition unduly influences patients’ perceptions of the service.                 | 8. Display prominent notices with contact details for building maintenance issues.  |
| Patients should be kept informed about current or planned building improvement works.   | 9. Display and otherwise communicate with all patients information about planned improvement works                                |



## Conclusion

Several patients mentioned recent improvement at St James and it is clear that after some negative local press and several inspections by the Care Quality Commission<sup>4</sup>, work to improve the service and environment is underway. We understand that work is being carried out to improve the consultation rooms and the practice recently replaced the tatty and torn waiting area chairs. As the CQC report of August 2014 notes, the improvements are being hampered by the premises structure, which St James Medical Practice does not have immediate control over.

That said, St James does have control over how its staff interact with patients and again improvements over the past year were noted by some patients. Good communication needs to be supported and encouraged by the management to ensure these improvements continue and are noticed by all patients.

The comments of the patients we spoke to and our recommendations should be discussed and reviewed in more detail with staff and the Patient Participation Group (PPG) at the surgery. Healthwatch Waltham Forest would encourage further and ongoing communication with all patients and their carers and we can offer support and advice on how best to do this.

St James Medical Practice is let down by a building that is quite obviously old and in urgent need of refurbishment. However, the surgery management should not dismiss all the criticism of the service as a consequence of the state of the building. They need to continue improving the service offered to patients despite the surroundings.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-559754901/inspection-report/1-5597549012014-08-08/08>

## Appendix 1: Comments from patients of the St James Medical Practice

| Comment  | Gender | Ethnicity  | Age group |
|--|--------|------------|-----------|
| I have no concerns about it and no comment   | Female | Not stated | under 18  |
| Booking is easy but sometimes you have to wait 15-20 minutes.  | Male   | Asian      | 18-24     |
| my daughter suffers from epileptic fits and this surgery messed her about for so long with her medication, other than that ok  | Female | Not stated | 18-24     |
| Good service good Drs  | Female | Not stated | 18-24     |
| Efficiency ok, usually delays. Failure to put correct info on file system has resulted in me returning 2 weeks later. When willing to help staff are great. If any major issues I suggest go into private.   | Female | Black      | 18-24     |
| The staff at the surgery are very polite and helpful. I don't like the waiting time for my appointments as sometimes I have to wait 20 minutes. They deal with my problems very well and are very good with dealing with emergencies.  | Female | White      | 18-24     |
| I feel that I have been given conflicting information from a few of the GPs here which ultimately has prolonged my illness in particular I feel I wasn't actually being listened to in one instance and I was prescribed almost redundant meds in regards to my problem because the GP didn't believe me   | Male   | Not stated | 18-24     |
| St James St has come along way within the past year, fast response on calls, on time with appointments and DRs have vastly improved. Receptionist are very helpful and polite  | Female | Not stated | 18-24     |
| The staff here is very good, the only problem I'm having is to get an appt. If I phone up sometime they don't listen what the problems is and just say no appointment available. I'm a mother of 4 kids so I will be needing emergency appointments. Also the Drs keep on changing so every time I come in there in there is a new Dr and then have to tell same problem all over again. | Female | Asian      | 25-34     |

|   |        |            |       |
|---|--------|------------|-------|
| Waiting long time to be seen and its not only this time every time you have to wait. Services not really nice. The Dr will see you at the end and will tell you to take paracetamol - doesn't matter what you're having.  | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| The GPs are good and they seeing us on time. The phone when we ring on the phone to them its take long waiting. Sometimes they can't give us an appointment on same day.  | Female | Asian      | 25-34 |
| Difficulty with telephone. Dr missed signs of labour, no examination. Went into labour at 26 weeks with twins, one still in hospital. Age 7.5, corrective 3.5mths. Misdiagnosis of blood infection resulting in 7 days in hospital on antibiotics   | Female | White      | 25-34 |
| I will say the only problem here is the waiting time, 46-60mins. Employees are very friendly and ready to help  | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| Too crowded, Drs seem to want you in and out quickly. Building and toilets need revamping, but I do have to say it is very easy to get am appointment, which is good  | Female | White      | 25-34 |
| it is good to have toilet facilities and baby changing but the building is run down   | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| The receptionists at this practice do not know how to talk to their patients. They have so much attitude it's appalling. Most of them are terribly rude; they seriously do not know how to behave with their patients in person or over the phone. They never have any appointments and the heater does not work anymore at the surgery so the baby clinic was shifted to mission grove. This clinic and surgery need a lot of improvement. | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| Alcohol gel dispenser not working, makes registering your arrival unhealthy as you don't know what disease the last person to touch the screen has.   | Female | White      | 25-34 |
| First time at Dr surgery so can't comment too much to date. However receptionists seem lovely and helpful   | Female | Other      | 25-34 |
| service is satisfactory, only problem is the process of booking appointments and waiting times  | Male   | Not stated | 25-34 |
| Appointment 65 minutes and counting late and still waiting. Accused of being too late by reception when I pointed out I had signed in and told I was on time. Then told to wait as they sorted it out.  | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| Ok service  | Male   | White      | 25-34 |

|  |        |            |       |
|--|--------|------------|-------|
| Actually I'm not a patient at St James, but my son and partner are. I have experience of number of times with the criteria of this surgery services. GPs are not seen to be very interested in their services. During my partner's pregnancy one of the GPs prescribed wrong medicine which was not meant to be taken while she was pregnant | Male   | Not stated | 25-34 |
| I think they do not have too much care when you come and complain about some pain, the reason I'm saying this is because my sister was complaining about pain for 2 weeks when we decided go to the hospital she had urgent surgery.   | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| The service are good and appointment booked in and deal with any problems.   | Male   | Not stated | 25-34 |
| We are happy on this GP, they are correct.   | Female | White      | 25-34 |
| The service at WF is helpful at the reception desk are polite and always ready for help. Only one problem is time waiting to see the Dr sometimes take 1 hour  | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| Reception staff could be a bit more helpful sometimes. Call back appointments with doctors it is a bit of a nightmare, easier to get a proper appointment, Other than that good with same day appointments, Could do with some renovation work   | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| Some services are good and available easily, Few times we don't get follow up results or appointments. Doctors just listen to top feeling and don't try to get to root of disease or problem. Time is limited especially for clinic for check-up   | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| Fantastic, always on time, help always available   | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| One nice, no problem   | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| The booking system is very bad. The waiting time for an appointment is also really bad. The way in which they screen what is considered an emergency needs improving. The reception staff are not Dr therefore shou...(unfinished comment)   | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| I'm used to a switched on/connected service of online booking and prescriptions in Liverpool, disappointed not to find it in London, would like evening surgery hours. Manages own diabetes and would prefer to see prescribing nurse at surgery   | Male   | White      | 25-34 |

|   |        |            |       |
|---|--------|------------|-------|
| The receptionists are much more helpful and efficient than they used to be. Although it is still a long wait to get through when calling for an appointment, they deal with you very efficiently. I've never seen the same GP twice however, which is to be expected in a busy practice but means I do not build up any kind of patient/carer relationship. Even if you arrive before your appointment there is always a long wait, it's too hot in here as well, especially with sick babies. Suggested improvements, they could provide baby changing facilities and somewhere to breastfeed. I have done both in the waiting room, where there are sick people and have been waiting so long | Female | white      | 25-34 |
| I have been with surgery for 8 years, as far as appointments are concerned on Mondays we don't get, its really busy, otherwise it is v. good, should be more female Drs, otherwise v good   | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| They giving us really good service. I am really happy about that.   | Female | Asian      | 25-34 |
| service is good, I'm happy  | Female | White      | 25-34 |
| Today in the morning it took a long time to make an appointment, after make an appointment they gave as time 10.10am, we came at 9.50am and now 10.31am, still waiting for the Dr to be seen. Too long to wait with so much pain in the back  | Male   | Not stated | 25-34 |
| I am very happy with services at Whipps X but I am not happy at all about GPs services. I have been 3 times to the GP with really bad pain on my back and they don't give me anything just advise me to do exercise.  | Female | Not stated | 25-34 |
| I'm very happy with the service the practice provides. The appointments are always on schedule, DRs are very helpful and friendly. I needed an MRI scan and only had to wait 2 weeks. All in all I'm very happy, keep up the good work.   | Male   | White      | 25-34 |
| Service so far has been great. Have been with the surgery since 2009. Dr has been good at their diagnosis for myself and my family  | Male   | Not stated | 25-34 |
| I am very happy with services at St James, staff are very friendly  | Male   | other      | 25-34 |
| Babies reviews in my experience need more attention to just his weight.   | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| My experiences in St James practice is not good about waiting time.   | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |

|   |        |            |       |
|---|--------|------------|-------|
| Receptionist need to be more kind with people with children because mother are very busy with babies and some time we not have all time waiting on the phone.   | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| Toilets and place need to be repaired because are not in good condition inside the place and outside looks horrible in my opinion.  | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| The surgery is always running late never respect the time of appointments. The [phone] line is always busy and by the time you get an answer they tell you that it is all fully booked.   | Female | White      | 35-44 |
| Drs keep changing hard to form patient Dr relationship with the constant changes. No female Dr for 6 weeks postnatal check. Difficult to get an appointment   | Female | Asian      | 35-44 |
| Building is in need of total renovation. It looks terrible from the exterior. Drs are good and the staff are helpful. The registration process is always a bit annoying (registering arrival for appointment) Main problem is that it need to be updated. This is not what you expect in a western country and it must be challenging for staff.                                  | Male   | White      | 35-44 |
| Excellent service. I find helpful their staff, specially reception dept. and emergency staff  | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| St James St practice is incompetent to the point of negligence. Over the last 6 months they have refused to see my 6 MTh old vomiting baby as it wasn't registered, causing me to burden A&E. They have also lost ultrasound scans of mine then not chased telling me they have, forcing me to chase myself.  | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| Every time when I come on GP I'm happy the Dr help me. Thank you  | Female | White      | 35-44 |
| better now that you can book appointment more than 3 hours in advance, but a shame that you still need to wait 2 weeks  | Male   | White      | 35-44 |
| Generally good. Good when trying to fit in appointments for small children not so great for adults as seem oversubscribed. Got much better recently with telephone answering. I haven't had great experiences with referrals.   | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| I find it easy to get an appointment at this surgery and have always found the staff - reception, nursing, Dr, - very polite and friendly. Bloods are also easy to access as long as you arrive early. The only thing I have an issue with is results follow up, I have results lost or been out of date and haven't ben informed till I have checked and they need to redo tests | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |

|   |        |            |       |
|---|--------|------------|-------|
| I haven't spotted any concern regarding children's health but in my opinion main entrance also some areas need to be repaired painted etc.  | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| I wanted the emergency appointment phoned them; they gave me appointment straight away. They are always helpful to me only thing I have to wait a lot to see the DR on emergency appointments.  | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| My 1st visit: Everything fine   | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| Today I came to the surgery for my appointment they said they called me to say they changed the time which they did not. They refuse to help so I have to sit here for 2 hours. Very unhelpful receptionists  | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| The surgery needs to be modernised, too many patients and less Drs, Waiting times are too long, Surgery to open longer hours, more telephone services.  | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| I needed an urgent appointment and to be sent results referrals + blood tests as is difficult to arrange bloods as I work in central London M-F, 9-5. The receptionist was not very helpful and made me feel unvalued although did grudgingly make me an appointment  | Male   | White      | 35-44 |
| Making an appointment is difficult, can wait a long time on phone. Surgery itself is a very unpleasant building and environment, high turnover of drs seem to be losing good drs. Have to ask why? Services a large population, not enough staff?   | Female | White      | 35-44 |
| Sometimes it is very hard contacting and booking appointments, when we are on time we need to wait a very long time to visit the Dr.  | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| Easy to get an emergency appointment, but long wait for routine ones. Referrals sometimes don't get made. Only 1 GP here I would feel confident seeing as I've had inadequate care from other. Often I have to return 2 or 3 times to get something dealt with properly, my son and husband have had the same problem. Ladies toilet is awful                     | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| Good service, good Drs  | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| When I registered at the practice in 2007 I was told that the building was to be re-built in 2 years. 7 year later the same building is in a terrible state and needs maintenance and re-building. It appears dirty and unhygienic. The reception is always blocked; it is hard to know where to queue. Also there is nothing to entertain children while waiting | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| Regular check-ups at the surgery is ok. Yearly smear test is ok   | Female | black      | 35-44 |

|  |        |            |       |
|--|--------|------------|-------|
| The receptionist team today is better than before, they are polite and helpful. Dr Menash is very helpful and professional, It is difficult to book an appointment   | Female | White      | 35-44 |
| 1st time GP - Boundary Rd closed. Chose due to location  | Female | Asian      | 35-44 |
| Constantly changing appointment system, Horrible dingy dirty old surgery, Appointments often run very late, but doctors are very friendly and helpful, Long waits at receptionists windows   | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| The service overall is OK, but sometimes I hate when change my appointment. Sometimes doctors have got not enough time to me, that means the consultation is not very good. I need sometimes more time to speak with doctors not only 10 minutes.  | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |
| Most of the time very good service we need to some kind service like ambulance service was very poor   | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| It is alright. For appointment is very difficult by phone  | Female | White      | 35-44 |
| Queuing to check in but can't see name on the alert board from the queue so if you are on time and can't use check in might miss your appt. Couldn't check in on machine if more than 5 minutes late so have to make a judgement when you arrive, need better system or call out the names as well.  | Male   | black      | 35-44 |
| It takes ages to have appointment via phone, otherwise quite a positive experience   | Female | White      | 35-44 |
| Surgery building is very depressing. Really glad replaced the awful old ripped chairs. DR service varies. Generally good but some GPs do not have great manners when dealing with you and not always confident they really care. Others are great. Overall not great at explaining things and treating patient as intelligent individuals  | Female | White      | 35-44 |
| I have to say my experiences of healthcare in WF have all been very positive. My GP takes a great proactive approach to health care. When I had to use Whipps Cross I was seen and sorted relatively quickly. And when my daughter was born at Whipps we couldn't complain about the treatment we received   | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| The postnatal & baby care provided has been good with frequent access to clinic for my sons born in 2006 and 2008. However in the last 2 years the appointment system here has become a nightmare. It has often seemed impossible to book an appointment for an adult consultation for the following week. You never get to see your own Dr on a regular basis I feel increasingly anxious and let down by the level of care | Female | Not stated | 35-44 |

|  |        |            |       |
|--|--------|------------|-------|
| This is the first time I'm using this service; but so far so good. I was able to be seen only two hours after calling.   | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| I am very happy to put my views for that purpose. Surgery system is very good but there is some problem with medication. If the patient have knee pain they give us only paracetamol, not a specific medication.   | Female | Asian      | 35-44 |
| The system of having appointments only 3 weeks in advance or "emergencies" on the day seems ill thought out. It presumes there are only 2 types of illness; the long-term mild and the urgent/serious. It only serves to encourage people to exaggerate to be seen and I assume places strain upon receptionists. too many signs, once you have 4 or more instructions people aren't going to read any of them | Male   | White      | 35-44 |
| Generally satisfied not had to utilise any health or social care services in months. Weekend surgery opening would be appreciated  | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| Good service, good treatment   | Male   | Not stated | 35-44 |
| I am very happy to have health care but 90 times out of 100 the appointments are not available. We have to ring at 8am and 2pm when we do the phone lines are always busy. This service is really poor and really disappointed. All we hope that we could book emergency appointment and general check up separately as before. many thanks  | Male   | Asian      | 35-44 |
| I think that sometimes it depends on the Dr as there are various Drs. Some are better than others  | Female | Black      | 45-54 |
| Important. I am not happy GP every time long waiting time 45 minutes, ST James not care  | Male   | Asian      | 45-54 |
| I will like to comment on the way the appointment to see the Dr is given. Priority should be given to people who go to work to be able to book an appointment when they are off duty. Also emergency appointments should be available to people who are very sick.   | Female | Not stated | 45-54 |
| Set pain physical treatment dept., for example, acupuncture and massage centre   | Male   | Not stated | 45-54 |
| Never see the same GP twice. Long wait for appointments, Some GPs I have seen have been v good but some dreadful, Support staff are helpful as can be. Building is horrible  | Female | Not stated | 45-54 |
| very good experiences, services are very good  | Male   | Not stated | 45-54 |

|  |            |            |       |
|--|------------|------------|-------|
| No good, Dr XX   | Female     | Not stated | 45-54 |
| good follow up calls and text, get emergency appointment when we called at 8am only, GP only discussed one problem at a time, that is very uncomfortable, prescription procedure is ok   | Male       | Asian      | 45-54 |
| The appointment system inflexible, in the case of emergency the patient has to turn up at the surgery and wait until all the other patients are seen. This is unworkable and in most cases inappropriate. In the case of young children you have to go to A&E. I am concerned that as someone who pays for my prescriptions GPs are now prescribing meds that are ineffective. On several occasions I have had to return to the surgery with the same symptoms and have had to request that the meds offered will be "fit for purpose" | Female     | black      | 45-54 |
| Surgery closes on Thursdays, it should be open   | Male       | Not stated | 45-54 |
| I rang 48 times this morning for an appt. Engaged constantly, I came to the surgery in person to get an appointment surgery was deserted at 8.10 except for 2 members of staff answering phone on desks. I should have made appointment on Friday (bad chest) but couldn't face trail of coming down. Now off sick from work. How many days are lost because patients can't make an appointment to see the Dr.   | Female     | White      | 45-54 |
| I find the service at St James quite good, although one has to wait even two weeks for an appointment. It is long time since I went Whipps Cross but the last time I went for my son the care was quite good.  | Female     | Not stated | 45-54 |
| As a worker I would appreciate your opening on Saturday mornings just for those who cannot come on Mon-Fri. Every other thing here is perfect, workers inclusive.  | Not stated | Black      | 45-54 |
| 8 minutes overdue of timed appointment   | Male       | Not stated | 45-54 |
| This building is filthy and needs refurbishing, The system of making appointments is almost prohibitive of helping patients. Times and booking need practical attention. There is no consistency in Drs, constantly new young inexperienced since Dr Kamar resigned.   | Female     | White      | 45-54 |
| Held on telephone for 14.6 minutes, 22 minutes, 40 minutes to get through to reception before they hung up on me. Eventually get through on the 7th attempt. Not at all happy with the service provided. Reception staff are rude. Have made complaints to the practice manager  | Male       | White      | 45-54 |

|  |        |            |       |
|--|--------|------------|-------|
| I've been with my surgery for over 30 years and have always had a good service from my GP. Although the premises could do with being upgraded and this new appointment system "on the same day" reversed and brought back to booking appointment in advance if possible, especially for patients who work  | Female | White      | 45-54 |
| We see the Dr when I call in emergency, but its fine.  | Male   | Other      | 55-64 |
| I am pleased with the service, however the building needs modernising. Drs and staff are very nice to me   | Female | Not stated | 55-64 |
| GP services is good I am happy with it , no comment  | Female | Not stated | 55-64 |
| It is very good service and time call and staff is good, friendly. Sometime if difficult English they help me, my language is Urdu and I am happy with this hospital (surgery), thank you  | Female | Asian      | 55-64 |
| I think it is getting better now. It's good  | Female | Not stated | 55-64 |
| Once I came in early to see the DR, I tried to sign in on the surgery screen but the screen was out of order. I was forced to join the queue hence making me late for my appointment time. I was punished for it. Otherwise it is a very friendly surgery.   | Female | Not stated | 55-64 |
| Very good service, polite reception  | Female | Black      | 55-64 |
| Very Good Surgery, very nice doctors   | Female | Not stated | 55-64 |
| I came for nurse's appointment on 24/9 on time and was told the nurse was not here so they made another appointment for me on 3/10, I came 10 minutes late I was turned away because of being 10 minutes late and they made another appt. I came in on time and now it is 8.30am and no sign of something, come on, call me, somebody call me. It is 9.30am, not too bad. The service is not good at all. No good service. | Male   | Not stated | 55-64 |
| No problem to get an appointment   | Female | Not stated | 55-64 |
| Bad service, it is not easy to make an appointment   | Male   | White      | 55-64 |

|  |        |            |       |
|--|--------|------------|-------|
| Toilets need cleaning more often and checks on soap, staff very polite, sometimes not enough seats   | Female | White      | 55-64 |
| Always very helpful, very efficient and friendly. Been able to get appt.   | Female | Not stated | 55-64 |
| The service is very good staff are friendly and helpful, areas is clean and safe   | Male   | Not stated | 55-64 |
| wait too long for an appointment, reception too slow   | Male   | White      | 55-64 |
| I get good overall service I have no real complaints   | Male   | White      | 55-64 |
| Low class. 2 x cancer cannot get to see a doctor or any support. Booking system is inadequate, only books for current week. Dr Khan v. quick to diagnose cancer and follow up treatment v good short term. Long term leaves a lot to be desired. 6 years ago fantastic, deteriorated over time, now very poor.   | Male   | Not stated | 55-64 |
| not very good as 10 minutes after appointment time I asked at reception and they said you are next, I had to wait for 15 minutes more  | Male   | Not stated | 55-64 |
| St James' practice staff at reception are very friendly and helpful.   | Female | Not stated | 65-74 |
| The ST James sty surgery has good Drs but seriously needs a new building. Whipps Cross also needs a new facility   | Male   | Not stated | 65-74 |
| We are fortunate to have a health service. It is at risk and it is vital to keep it up for those who are vulnerable and unable to afford to live healthily. I appreciate the service and care I receive here however it is yet to be holistic. It has to be radically rethought with the patient at the centre. We who use it need to take more responsibility for our own health. | Female | Not stated | 65-74 |
| would be better if you saw same doctor but otherwise quite good  | Female | Not stated | 65-74 |
| Sir, I am with this surgery since 25yrs. It is the very good surgery with good DRs and nurses  | Male   | Asian      | 65-74 |
| Sometimes have to wait a week for an appt. Staff seem to be more polite in their approach the moment as before had attitude problems   | Female | Not stated | 65-74 |

|   |            |            |            |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Booking OK, waiting is too long, very happy with treatment. With them 20 +yrs, Dr R is my doctor and very nice.   | Female     | Asian      | 65-74      |
| I have been visiting the surgery since many years, happy most of the time. I've never seen the same GP twice however, which is to be expected in a busy practice but means I do not build up any kind of patient/carer relationship                                 | Female     | Not stated | 65-74      |
| Prescribed drug, Mr Kawar stopped the use due to side effect and banned future use. Different Dr in practice prescribed same drug even after being made aware of the ban, Dr may have been a locum. Confusion over which drug he should be taking                   | Male       | Not stated | 65-74      |
| been a patient at this surgery for over 30 yrs, very satisfied  | Male       | White      | 65-74      |
| seems to me not too bad, everything is going ok   | Male       | Asian      | 65-74      |
| This health centre the staff are very helpful and patient. I have been coming here since 1970 and have never had a problem. It is a very busy health centre and they can't answer the phone to take appointments so I take a walk to make my appointments           | Female     | Not stated | 65-74      |
| Disability of knee, right hand and some problems. Very difficult to get appointment   | Male       | Asian      | 75-84      |
| Two of the girls left about 1 year ago. Reception has not been so good. They know my background and did a good job of sorting me out.   | Female     | White      | not stated |
| Don't like the appointment system, was taken off the practice list after years, they did not know why then reinstated me.   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| don't like the service of reception, because you put request for lady Dr but they put man Dr and they are very rude   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| Good Drs, early appointments good service   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| Good points : Receptionist are usually friendly and helpful. If I ring 1st thing in the morning I can nearly always get an appointment that day. The doctors are always courteous and respectful.   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| Having recently transferred from another surgery in S London I was somewhat dismayed at the short hours/closed weekends policy here. Illness doesn't work on a schedule and it seems an unnecessary burden on Whipps cross considering the volume of patients here. | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |

|  |            |            |            |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| I don't come very often and it's quite a good service.   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| I never get to see the same doctor, takes too long to book an appointment, appointments are always running late which is not great when you have to get to work.   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| It's not easy to book an appointment unless it's an urgent one. The waiting time is not sensible at all, If patients have to wait 2 weeks to be seen by a doctor , why bother?   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| I've come to register as a new patient. I've been registered before in numerous practices around London and this one certainly seems one of the best organised and laid out. I had to wait a few days for an appointment but that's fairly normal.   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| Needs Air Condition, Machine not working to check in, so waiting in reception queue.   | Male       | White      | not stated |
| No parking - needs a good clean, quite dirty for a Drs surgery, layout is not well thought out and could function better if re-arranged.   | Male       | Not stated | not stated |
| Not so good points: It is very difficult to get through on the phone 1st thing, so can't always get an appointment. Sometimes takes more than 1/2 hr of continuous re-dialling. Can't choose to see a particular Dr.   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| not such a long wait, surprised not very busy  | Male       | Not stated | not stated |
| Positive - midwifery clinic very close, made choice to come her as very convenient.  | Female     | Not stated | not stated |
| Sometimes waiting times are long. Very pleasant receptionists.   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| The issue of phoning in the surgery to get an appointment to speak to a GP is very frustrating as it is difficult to get through, also if your phone is busy when the doctor calls, you have to go through the whole process again   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| The reception staff are quite friendly at times, the waiting time can be frustrating because they are running late most of the time, I have waited up to an hour. My daughter suffers with asthma and the school informed me that her inhaler was out of date so I came straight to the surgery to try and get a new one. The same day and to my surprise the reception staff arranged for me to pick one up within the hour | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |

|   |            |            |            |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| The waiting time is always too long, there should be a notice to warn patients if the services are running late so they know what to do i.e. postpone their appointment after GP etc.   | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| The waiting time is too long and trying to get to see someone can take two weeks now. Trying to get your prescriptions never come on time, it's either lost or not been seen by doctors. Also when you see them they don't tell you all about your health; I found out 2 years later. | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| When telephone - no mention must book by 8am for same day, called 15 times to get through. 11 am talked to reception and offered appointment in 10 minutes time, after initially told there was no appointment. Reception are not the most polite.                                    | Male       | Not stated | not stated |
| Booking an appointment was easy, waiting time at reception was 10 minutes due to long queue. Waiting room was clean and quiet.  | Female     | Not stated | not stated |
| St James surgery when you call it is impossible to get through. When you do you are asked stupid questions you may get an appointment for 12.40 and not be seen until after 1pm but if you are even 5 minutes late the Dr will not see you. Staff are not always friendly             | Female     | Not stated | not stated |
| charged £15 for letter for Diabetes Type I for air travel purposes  | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| My concern is about appointment times, it should be more flexible. Staff is friendly  | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |
| I am very happy with the service I get from my GP. Although not all the time, but I am quite happy. The health services which I get.  | Female     | Not stated | not stated |
| The waiting environment is always unpleasant. It is noisy and overcrowded. Children are allowed to shout and run around.  | Not stated | Not stated | not stated |

## Appendix 2: Comments on this report from St James Medical Practice

At the end of January 2015, we would like to report the following updates to patients:

- NHS England unfortunately withdrew funding for the re-build despite our objections, but they have refurbished the clinical rooms.
- The issue of heating has been resolved; they have installed electric heaters throughout the building.
- We have introduced a GP triage system for urgent appointments so that patients can speak to a GP sooner for their urgent medical problem to be assessed.
- We have updated our website so that it is much easier to navigate and have also updated the information on there. The practice on the whole has put much more of a focus on communicating with patients and those thinking of registering via this medium as we are aware that patients are using this facility more and more.
- We will be introducing the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) on 11/03/2015 to allow patients to get their prescription directly to their nominated pharmacy making life a lot easier for everyone - ideally no more lost prescriptions.
- We will be introducing online prescriptions requests before 31st March 2015 so in conjunction with EPS, this should make prescriptions much easier to deal with for us, patients and pharmacies.
- We have introduced new systems in our administrative team to make the flow of documents to the GPs much quicker so any necessary action can be taken sooner.

## Glossary

**A&E** - Accident and Emergency centre in hospital

**CQC** - Care Quality Commission

**FFT** - Friends and Family Test - Feedback tool used in the NHS to gather opinion from patients on their experiences of services

**GP Patient satisfaction survey** - The GP Patient Survey is an independent survey run by Ipsos MORI on behalf of NHS England. The survey is sent out to over a million people across the UK. The results show how people feel about their GP practice

**PPG** - Patient Participation Group