

Sonning Common Health Centre

Patients Survey 2024

Introduction

The aim of the survey was to find out the level of the patient's satisfaction with the services provided by Sonning Common Health Centre (SCHC) and if any improvements or changes are required in relation to the range of services offered, timescales, and the overall experience of care provided by staff at SCHC.

The results of the survey clearly show that SCHC provides exceptional services which are greatly valued by the patients. In particular, the patients were appreciative of not being rushed during appointments, being treated with care and respect and being offered the appropriate type of help and services.

Methodology

The survey was designed by the Patients Participation Group (PPG) with input from one of the GPs at SCHC.

The survey was carried out by members of the PPG and it was a peer-to-peer process.

SCHC was very supportive of the survey and provided the necessary resources and support to facilitate carrying out the survey.

The survey was carried out online and in person. The link to the online survey was emailed by the chair of the PPG to 243 patients on the PPG mailing list. The in-person surveys took place over two days in March 2024. On the first day, two members of the PPG spent the morning in the waiting room asking patients to fill out the survey and helping some of the patients who were unable to do it themselves (e.g. due to poor eyesight). The process was repeated on the second day in the afternoon to ensure that both patients attending morning appointments and afternoon appointments were represented. Members of the PPG explained to each patient the purpose of the survey and that it was carried out on behalf of the Patients Participation Group.

Hardly any of the patients in the waiting room present on those two days did not participate in the survey (this was either due to feeling unwell or lack of time to complete the survey before the appointment). Most of the patients not only willingly filled out the survey, but also made a lot of positive comments verbally about SCHC to the PPG members.

98 patients completed the online survey and a further 107 patients completed the survey in person. This represents 0.2% of the overall number of patients registered at SCHC.

If the sample failed to show clear trends in the responses given by the patients, further attempts would have been made to collect more responses. However, the analysis of the survey shows that the vast majority of the patients share similar views about SCHC, so the sample of over 200 completed surveys appears to be representative of the views of the patients.

Findings

Booking an appointment

Most patients (67%) book appointments by phone. Phone appointments are favoured by all age groups. In-person appointments are mainly made by patients who are over 70 years old.

The second most popular way to book appointments is through the NHS app (14.3%). 1 in 4 patients who are 30 - 50 and 1 in 5 patients who are 50 - 70 use the NHS app to make the appointments. The app is less popular with patients over 70 (only 8% of these patients use the app).

The Patient Access portal is used by 11.8% of patients to make appointments. This is favoured by patients who are 50 - 70 years old (66.3%) and 70+ (31.8%).

Most patients (76%) find it very easy or fairly easy to get through to the reception. Only one person declared that they found it difficult and a further 12 people (5.9%) found it somehow difficult.

On the whole, patients found the receptionists to be either very helpful (73%) or fairly helpful (25%). Only 4 out of 205 patients didn't consider the receptionists to be helpful. Patients made many positive comments about the experience of booking appointments by phone (including the availability of urgent appointments) and described the receptionists as being *“professional, caring and understanding”*, *“cheerful and willing to help”* and *“kind”*.

Most patients stated that they were asked for reasons to make an appointment in a sensitive manner. However, 1 in 8 patients didn't think that this was the case. One patient commented that they did not think that they should be asked for a reason to make an appointment as a walk-in patient as they could be overheard. A couple of patients stated that they are only willing to give limited information to a receptionist.

Website

Just over half of the patients find the website either very easy or fairly easy to use for information or to access services. A third of the patients have not used the website at all.

Waiting times for appointments

28% of patients are willing to wait longer to see their own GP or the one they've been seeing for a specific problem to ensure continuity with a further 52.5% willing to wait longer depending on condition. 1 in 5 patients stated that they are happy to see another GP rather than wait longer for an appointment with their own GP.

Only 17.7% of patients expect to see their own GP within 4 - 5 days as opposed to 46.5% who expect to see a GP (not necessarily their own) within 4 - 5 days. 1 in 3 patient considers 6 - 7 days to be a reasonable waiting time for an appointment with a GP (either

their own or another GP in the surgery). More patients are willing to wait 8 - 10 days for an appointment with their own GP (31%) than an appointment with a GP who is not their own (14.9%). Several patients commented that they much prefer to see their own GP so that they don't have to explain their condition every time they have an appointment.

"It is important to me to see my usual GP within a shorter waiting period"

"I would prefer to see the same doctor (unless an urgent appointment is needed). It would save going through my history every time."

Almost half of the surveyed patients (44.1%) are prepared to wait 2 weeks for a specialist clinic. 20% of patients are prepared to wait a week for a specialist appointment and a further 20% are prepared to wait 3 weeks. Only 15.3% of patients stated that they were willing to wait 4 weeks.

Care and attention at the GP appointments

Over 90% of patients have either a very positive or good experience of the appointments in terms of being given enough time, being listened to and treated with care and concern. Several patients commented on not feeling rushed and described the GPs as being *"helpful"*, *"supportive"*, *"very kind and understanding"* and *"showing empathy"*.

Only 1 person reported a negative experience of the appointment describing it as *"poor"*.

Some patients named their GPs and praised them for the care received.

Most of the less favourable comments made by patients appear to be about issues not directly related to the appointments (e.g. waiting for a specialist service or deterioration in health).

Answers to the question about how different options are explained at the appointment indicate slightly less satisfaction than questions relating to being given enough time, listened to and being treated with care and concern. Whilst 67.6% of patients agree that their GP explained the different options available to them very well, 25% think that the GP was good at explaining the options and further 6.9% of patients didn't think that the GP was either good or bad at explaining the options. One patient commented that they were *"slightly rushed as it was difficult to take it all in"* and another stated that the GP didn't *"seem to know what the options are"*.

Most patients were satisfied that the GP recognised and addressed their mental health problems (if relevant), with only 2.5% of patients claiming that this was not the case.

The overwhelming majority of patients have confidence in the healthcare professional they saw at the last appointment (83.7% claim that they definitely have confidence with a further 14.4% claiming that they have the confidence to some extent).

Only 2% of patients were either unable to comment or did not have confidence in their healthcare professional. One patient commented that the doctor consulted another doctor before deciding the best treatment which was reassuring. Another stated that *"All GPs and nurses at practice are exceptionally professional and helpful"*.

Similarly, most patients (75.4%) claim that their needs were met at the appointment with a further 21.7% stating that their needs were met to some extent. Only 2% of patients stated that their needs were not met.

96.7% of patients described their experience of the GP practice as either very good (80.6%) or fairly good (16.9%) and made a lot of positive comments about the level of services provided by SCHC including:

“This surgery provides services of exceptional quality”

“Fabulous practice - always feel supported and cared for”

“It has been consistently good over many years and well managed”

“Every time I visit the doctor, no matter how 'trivial' the problem may have been, I never felt I wasted their time. The problem was always taken seriously”

Comments and suggestions from the patients

Many patients left very positive comments about the surgery stating that they don't want any changes:

“Keep up the good approach to treating your patients as patients. Please do not let your standards slip”

“Keep up the good work”

“Keep doing what you are doing. You are a superb team”

Some patients expressed a concern that the surgery is at risk of being overwhelmed due to the increasing number of patients (e.g. the retirement village).

Patients made several suggestions relating to changes in the surgery. Some of them relate to specific medical conditions such as improved availability of containers for needles, a skin conditions clinic, shorter waiting times for appointments for patients with asthma and UTI patients being able to drop off samples without a prior telephone call with a GP.

Other suggestions include:

- The waiting room to be aired, TV screens to be on and magazines available. More seats with arms were also requested.
- Improvements to the Patients Access with regard to repeat prescriptions and ease of use
- Being able to book an appointment with a nurse via the NHS app
- Shorter waiting times for appointments (particularly with own GP) and the option for longer appointments and annual reviews

Information about patients taking part in the survey

Most of the patients taking part in the survey are either 50 - 70 years old (41.7%) or 70+ (43.1%). 2 out of 3 patients are female. Most are white (93.5%) followed by any other white background (3.5%).

This is consistent with the demographics of the area covered by SCHC. For example, according to the Census 2001, over 60% of people living in Sonning Common are either 50 - 70 years old (27.3%) or over 70 years old (32.9%), 96% of people are white and there are more females than males. This is very similar to the demographics of Peppard (more than half of residents are over 50 years old, most are white and there are more females than males).

Conclusion

The survey was designed by the patients of SCHC to gather views of patients. The sample of 205 completed surveys shows that patients think highly of the services they receive from SCHC and appreciate the level of professionalism and care shown by the staff.

Patients would like shorter waiting times and in particular, being able to see their own GP without waiting too long. There is a high level of satisfaction both with booking the appointments (most prefer to do so by phone) and the appointments as patients feel that they are being listened to, not rushed and they receive appropriate care.