

SOMETHING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT? REVISITED



A follow up to “Something to Complain About?” - A look at how easy it is to find the right information and support to make a complaint about GP services.

Table of Contents

SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	4
FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW	6
CONCLUSIONS	8
RECOMMENDATIONS	8
APPENDIX	9
REFERENCES	12
THANKS	12

Summary

In April 2014 Healthwatch Dorset undertook a comprehensive exercise, using volunteers as “mystery shoppers”, to visit every GP practice across Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth to gain an insight into how people are provided with information and support if they wanted to raise any concerns they may have about GP services.

Full details of that work, the findings, conclusions and subsequent recommendations can be found in the full report “Something to Complain About?” available on the Healthwatch Dorset website www.healthwatchdorset.co.uk and will not be replicated here. Healthwatch Dorset also committed to subsequently revisiting this issue to ascertain whether any recommendations had been implemented.

This update focuses on the results of a repeat review of all GP practice web sites (where a web site is in place).

March 2015

Introduction

Some of the feedback received to our original report “Something to Complain About?”

“This is just what general practice needs. All too easy to become complacent or to be stuck in the past. I am looking forward to discussing this with my team!” (West Dorset Practice)

“That is very useful thank you. Any guidance on how we can improve our service is always welcomed”. (Purbeck Practice)

“Thank you so much. This will make a great discussion document for our team meetings next week. I am most grateful for this”. (West Dorset Practice)

“I can see where we need to improve which I found enormously helpful”. (Dorchester Practice)

“Staff meeting next week, I can feel some training coming on!! Really useful exercise - thank you”. (North Dorset Practice)

“You may be interested to know that we had a management meeting this morning to discuss the report. As a result, we have made immediate improvements to the website... In addition, we will be including a few more thoughts on complaints handling in our latest staff bulletin in case there is anything further that we can do to improve the process. I will be forwarding a copy of the detailed report to all staff for them to read and comment upon. We will also be including details of the inspection on our next quarterly patient newsletter which will be available in hard copy and on our website”. (East Dorset Practice)

“Thanks for this and the personalised feedback too. Really useful information! I was due to do a review of last year’s “complaints” so will now use your report to jazz up the training review and make us all stop and think about how we respond. Also very useful to make me check our website to see how accessible the information is and how up to date”. (West Dorset Practice)

“This is helpful and informative. We have a number of new staff and so this will help me to identify where there may be some learning gaps”. (Bournemouth Practice)

“I feel mortified by our report - so we have put in swift measures to ensure that we do better in the future and will also be having staff training on complaints in three weeks’ time where we will review the practice policy. I really do feel that the mystery shopper has brought to our attention a serious flaw in our system so I am very happy that this exercise has been carried out”. (Poole Practice)

“Very interesting to read which will now enable us to improve our complaints process”. (Weymouth Practice)

“What an excellent piece of work, thank you. The findings are extremely interesting and the report informative. We will do our best to act on the recommendations”. (West Dorset Practice)

“Just to say, I may not like the results but I think mystery shopping is an excellent idea and have often wondered how I could do this at our Practice”. (West Dorset Practice)

“Many thanks for sharing this report with us. We will review the learning to see if there are opportunities for improving the experience for patients making a complaint in Dorset and the wider Wessex area”. (NHS England - Wessex Area Team)

Findings of the Review

All GP practice web sites were reviewed for the same information, using the same criteria as in the previous exercise, checking to ascertain:

- If information about making a complaint can be found quickly and easily.
- If a comprehensive explanation of the complaints procedure (either as a page or as a link to an online complaints leaflet) is provided.
- If information is provided about independent sources of advice and support.
- Whether all information is correct and up to date.

Following the review we emailed all Practice Managers (see appendix) to let them know that the review had been undertaken and advising them that some web sites were still providing incorrect or out-of-date information. We also provided a list of useful information that could be included on web sites, giving all practices the opportunity to make any changes before the publication of this report.

Results

We commend the many practices that have made changes to update or correct information on their web sites.

The 48 practices listed below responded to our 2014 report “Something to Complain About?” and also to our email “chaser” and made changes to their web sites, updated their complaints processes and/or documentation and/or practice leaflets and provided more staff training and support to raise awareness of the importance of complaints and supporting patients who may wish to raise a concern with their practice.

In our original report we noted that 6 practices did not have a practice specific web site. This second review has found that only 3 currently do not have a web site. One of these has advised that they are actively seeking to develop their web presence and one (Corfe Castle Surgery) has a detailed listing on the NHS Choices web site instead (including comprehensive information regarding complaints).

At the same time, some other practice web sites are still providing out-of-date information such as PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) or NHS Complaints Advocacy Service details and some sites still do not provide full and comprehensive information about complaints processes and sources of help, advice and support.

Practices that responded to Recommendations	
Apples Medical Centre	Milton Abbas Surgery
Banks & Bearwood Medical Centre	Northbourne Surgery
Barton House Surgery	Old Dispensary
Broadmayne Surgery	Orchard Surgery
Bute House Surgery	Orchid House Surgery
Canford Health Group Practice	Panton Practice
Corfe Castle Surgery	Parkstone Health Centre
Cornwall Road Surgery	Poole Town Surgery
Cerne Abbas Surgery	Portesham Surgery
Cross Road Surgery	Pound Piece Surgery
Dr Newman's Surgery	Puddletown Surgery
Durdells Avenue Surgery	Quarter Jack Surgery
Eagle House Surgery	Rosemary Medical Centre
Evergreen Oak Surgery	Sandford Surgery
Farmhouse Surgery	Shelley Manor Medical Centre
Fordington Surgery	Stalbridge Surgery
Hadleigh Practice	Swanage Medical Centre
Harvey Practice	St. Albans Medical Centre
Holdenhurst Road Surgery	The Bridges Medical Centre
James Fisher Medical Centre	The Practice plc
Leybourne Surgery	Tunnel Road Surgery
Lilliput Surgery	Wareham Surgery
Lyme Bay Surgery	Whitecliff Surgery
Maiden Newton Practice	Woodlea House Surgery

We would like to highlight the following as just some examples of good practice in terms of information provided on practice web sites:

The Old Dispensary www.theolddispensary.co.uk

Bridport Medical Centre www.bridportmedicalcentre.co.uk

Barton House Surgery www.bartonhousemedicalpractice.co.uk

Conclusions

- 2.1 Many practices have updated their web sites and their documentation and provided training to staff.
- 2.2 Some practices are still failing to provide good quality, detailed and up to date information on their web sites for people who may be considering making a complaint.
- 2.2 The NHS Constitution and NHS England set out clear requirements¹ for practices to meet in regards to complaints procedures (for example, in relation to the timescale within which a complaint must be acknowledged) and some practices are not meeting some of these requirements.

Recommendations

- 3.1 As stated in our previous report, we recommend that information should be checked regularly to ensure it is comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date and includes all necessary contact details (telephone numbers as well as email addresses and web sites - or links to web sites) of all the relevant independent sources of advice. It is important that the role of these organisations is explained clearly, concisely and in plain English. (Practices have a contractual obligation to ensure that all complainants know they have the right to make their complaint to NHS England.)
- 3.2 We also repeat our previous recommendation that all practices place all their complaints information on their web site on a single Complaints page, preferably with an obvious link from the Home page.

¹ <http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Interim-complaints-policy.pdf>

Appendix

Email to all Practice Managers

For the attention of the Practice Manager

Dear all,

As you will have read (see attached for your information) in our report published in April 2014, Healthwatch Dorset committed to undertaking a follow up exercise 6 months after publication. We have now completed this exercise, a further review of all practice websites (publication in spring 2015). This review was to establish whether practices had implemented any of our recommendations (in terms of website updates) to ensure complaints information is accurate, comprehensive and easy to access.

Over 30 practices advised us they would be either making changes to websites, practice policies, documentation/leaflets, staff training information and/or reviewing internal complaints procedures. We thank you for taking on board our feedback. However there are still a number of practices showing factually incorrect information on their sites. Some practices have no complaints information at all on their site; some still have very basic information.

The following information should help you to update your sites, where necessary. Please do let us know if you change the information on your website as we would like to acknowledge that in the publication of our follow up report in Feb.

For information - full details of the NHS complaints procedure are available through the NHS Choices website
<http://www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS/Rightsandpledges/complaints/Pages/NHScomplaints.aspx>

We also refer you to The Old Dispensary website as an example of good practice which may help other practices to update sites
<http://www.theolddispensary.co.uk/>

Note - The Patient Advice and Liaison Service no longer exists within primary care settings (it does still exist in acute Trusts). Old PALS information should be removed from web sites and documentation.

Note - The independent complaints advocacy support service for Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset is now provided by Dorset Advocacy. Reference to old ICAS or SEAP numbers/sites etc. should be removed.

Note - references to Health Authorities, Health Boards, Healthcare Commission, PCTs, Healthpoint, Patient & Public Involvement Forums (PPIF)

and Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) should also be removed, as these no longer exist.

Note - NHS England advises complaints should be acknowledged within 3 working days and investigated within 10 days. A number of sites are quoting different timescales.

We would also recommend that links to complaints information/procedures etc. is made via the Home page of all websites for ease of access.

Recommended sources of advice/support re complaints:

Dorset Advocacy - Help with NHS Complaints is a free and independent service that listens, offers support and representation to people who are unhappy about their experience with the NHS. You may already have started a complaint, or you may just be wondering what to do next; we may be able to help you. **Call us on 0300 343 7000, email on nhscomplaints@dorsetadvocacy.co.uk or use the contact form on our website www.dorsetadvocacy.co.uk** to speak to one of our trained Independent Complaints Information Officers, who can tell you about the options for taking your complaint forward. If you decide that you want to make a formal complaint, they can help you to set it out clearly and effectively. **For more complex complaints** we provide Independent Complaints Advocates who offer face to face support. They may attend complaints hearings with you, helping you to prepare and put forward your case.

Dorset Advocacy also provides the Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) service for Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth. By law people who are unable to make decisions about serious issues and have no one to speak up for them must be referred to the IMCA service. Enquiries can be made from staff, relatives or friends by calling the hotline 0845 3891762 - however a formal referral must be made by health or social care staff before work can begin.

NHS England. The NHS is made up of numerous different organisations. NHS England is the organisation responsible for commissioning or purchasing primary care services (such as GPs, dentists, opticians, pharmacies etc.) on behalf of the population. You can make your complaint directly to them if you prefer. Contact details:

Phone: 0300 311 2233 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm excluding English Bank Holidays). They will take a note of your complaint and arrange for it to be passed to the complaints manager.

Email; england.contactus@nhs.net with "For the attention of the complaints manager" in the subject line.

Write to: NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT

Website: <http://www.england.nhs.uk/contact-us/complaint/>

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman - The Ombudsman will normally only take on a complaint after you have first tried to resolve the issue with the surgery and have received a response from them. The Ombudsman believes the surgery should be given a chance to respond to your complaint and, where appropriate, try to put things right before they get involved. Contact details:

Phone: 0345 015 4033 or text phone 0300 061 4298. Helpline is open 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday. To request a call back text "call back" with your name and mobile phone number to 07624 813005

Email: phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk

Fax: 0300 061 4000

Write to: The Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4QP

Website: www.ombudsman.org.uk

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent health and adult social care regulator. Their job is to make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate and high-quality care. They do that by monitoring, inspecting and regulating services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety and they publish what they find, including performance ratings to help people choose care. The CQC doesn't manage individual complaints about GPs and their services but you can still let them know your about your experiences should you wish to do so. Contact details:

Phone: 03000 616161

Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

Online form at <http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/contact-us-using-our-online-form>

Action Against Medical Accidents - the UK charity for patient safety and justice. They provide free and confidential advice and support to people affected by medical accidents and can refer to a panel of specialist clinical negligence solicitors or other sources of support where appropriate.

Phone: 0845 123 2352 (Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm)

Website: www.avma.org.uk

Healthwatch Dorset - Healthwatch is the independent consumer champion created to gather and represent the views of the public. The aim of Healthwatch is to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Although they can't deal with individual complaints they can use your experience of the care you have received to help make services better in the future. Contact details:

Phone: 0300 111 0102 (calls cost the same as 01 or 02 numbers)

Email: enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk

Write: FREEPOST RTJR-RHUU-XBLH, Healthwatch Dorset, 896 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH7 6DL
Use our online “Speak Out” form at <http://www.healthwatchdorset.co.uk/content/your-story-can-change-local-health-and-care-services>

You can also find us at Citizens Advice Bureau offices across Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth

We do hope you find this information useful.

Regards

References

Healthwatch Dorset (2014) *Something to Complain About?*

Available from:

<http://www.healthwatchdorset.co.uk/resources/something-complain-about>

Thanks

We would like to thank all the Healthwatch Dorset Champions who took part in this review.

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