Dear PPG,

Welcome to our first quarter newsletter for year 2022/2023. I would like to discuss the topics highlighted in the last quarter newsletter.

I sent out the newsletter with a few topics to discuss along with a questionnaire. Unfortunately we didn’t get the response I was hoping for.

1. Access to the practice – At the moment there is work taking place in front of the Health Centre. Since our last newsletter I contacted the Bolton Council highways department to try and get an update, due to patients finding it hard to access the Health Centre and is causing delays with appointments. The highways and engineering division contacted me back in March to apologise for the disruption this has been causing our patients and that the work is due to be completed by Easter – subject to weather conditions. As you can see this work is still ongoing.
2. Environment (condition of the practice/cleanliness) – We have had no comments from patients or this group regarding the condition of the practice and its cleanliness, which is good. I have asked the Bolton FT – Infection control, to do a walk around of the building to ensure we are keeping up to date with the regulations and guidance. This will be taking place around June/July and the report will then be sent to the building owners.
3. Practice staff service (Reception, Nursing Team, GPs, and Management) – We have had a mixed review on the practice team and the service. As you knew we have had a change of team over the last few months.

The reception team are still undergoing training and continue to complete mandatory training including customer service. The clinical team, especially the nursing team, have received good feedback through the Friends and Family (F&F) questionnaire that is sent out after every appointment.

If you complete any of these, please could you state the clinicians name or even the staff member in reception so we can action or forward any feedback received?

1. Appointments- Another issues that has been mentioned within the F&F is face to face appointments. We have, as mentioned in the last newsletter been trialling a limited amount of face to face pre-bookable appointments with Dr Thagia. She has now increased the availability to a few in the afternoons.

**Questionnaire response:**

Bolton Quality Contract

It was brought to light that patients aren’t aware of the Bolton Quality Contract (BQC) and why is was implemented back in 2015.

The Contract was implemented in 2015 by the Bolton CCG and with a GP from Bolton leading on this. The aim of the BQC was to deliver an improvement in the quality of services, better health for the population of Bolton. Patient will experience a more accessible service and consistent offer across all practices within Bolton.

The BQC set out 19 standards that practices within Bolton had to follow and implement. Over the years some standards have been removed and new standards have been added.

You may see various invites from the practice asking to attend for a Health Check, Carers Check or even an Ageing well check. These are all part of the current BQC. The future of this contract is unknown as it is revisited and renewed on a yearly bases.

Access

Appointments - The access over the past 2 years has been difficult throughout the pandemic as we were advised by NHS England to operate via a remote triage service. We are aware that this hasn’t suited all patients, but this was a system we had to implement to protect patients, staff and also the NHS.

As restriction eased all over the country, this caused issues within the Healthcare sector. Staff members started to be off with COVID, patients were under the impression that COVID had gone and General Practice would also be back up and running with face to face appointments.

Unfortunately, this has not fully been the case. Our nursing team have and are seeing patients face to face due to the nature of their reviews. The GPs continued to do remote triage service and see patients face to face when necessary. This system has slowly been reduced and one GPs is currently seeing face to face. The main issue is our waiting room is only a small space to maintain the distance to protect our vulnerable patients.

Your input on how we can deal with the waiting room once more GPs start to see patients would be appreciated.

Phone lines - The amount of phone calls the practice receives had also increased during the pandemic and we only have the four lines and 3 to 4 members of staff answering them, while also see to the reception desk. Unfortunately this is something we can’t increase or have the capacity for. We are hoping once things do start to calm down the calls will go back to a manageable amount. We are currently in contact with our phone provider to get a queuing system.

Cancer screening

As part of the BQC, we had to look at our processes for patients who DNA (Bowel, Breast and Cervical Screenings). The current process we have in place is whenever we received a DNA letter for one of the stated screenings, we either sent a letter or text message, informing patients the importance and with information links and contact numbers attached.

Breast screenings is slightly different as practices are only allocated a 3 yearly slot. Every 3 years patients registered with the practice will be invited for their screening. Patients are able to self-refer if they missed this and wish to have the screening done.

We are hoping by doing this, it will increase the uptake of the screenings for our patients.

Improvements to the practice

GP rota: We had a suggestion to add the GP rota on to our website, stating which days they are working. This has now been completed, I’m unable to add times as some days they will be allocated to be the on call GP.

Face to face appointments: As stated above this is an ongoing task, we have increased these to 6 face to face pre-bookable in the morning and 5 in the afternoon with Dr Thagia. We do also have the facility to do video consultations, but the demand was very low for this. If this is something you feel you would like, you can ask at the point of the appointment and the receptionist can mark this down on your consultation for the GP.

Online services: It has been mentioned that online prescription ordering is a good service, but did you also know we offer an online consultation service. This requires you to complete a selection of questions and then this is sent to the practice, the practice will then respond within 2 working days. <https://www.online-consult.co.uk/org/dr-earnshaw-and-partners>

**Topics next quarter:**

**Please email back with areas you wish me to discuss or if you have anything you would like to me to look into.**

As always the practice values feedback and suggestions.

Take care, Keep safe

Dr Earnshaw and Partners