

Healthwatch Derby Insight Report – GP’S experiences of public behaviour and vaccination enquiries at primary care level.

Reporting to:	GPs / CCG / JUCD
Sector:	Primary
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Date periods covered in the report:	Autumn 2020 - January 2021

Overview of the Report

In October 2020 Healthwatch Derby was contacted by a local GP who raised issues regarding changes in the public behaviour. They stated that they have noticed an increase in negative behaviours from the public which was having a detrimental effect on staff and moral.

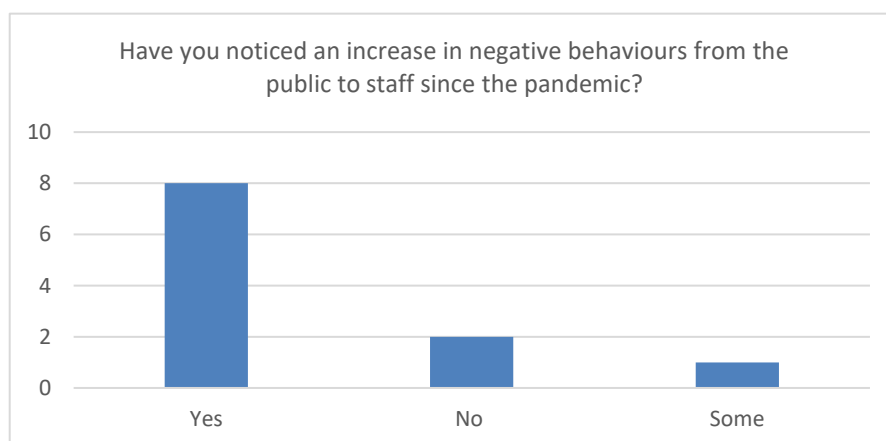
Healthwatch Derby spoke to the CCG about exploring these issues in more detail to see if other practices were having similar experiences, if there were any themes and suggestions for improvement. The CCG were supportive and welcomed the project. It was decided to take the opportunity to ask GPs about any vaccination enquiries and if there were any themes around questions or demographics which could support the system in learning.

Week commencing 11th January the project was launched, all GPs within the city were contacted. They were asked to feedback if they had noticed any changes in public behaviour towards them in recent months and if they had received many questions around vaccines.

Around half of the practices responded, these 11 practices run 21 branches within the city.

Behaviours of the public

Have you noticed an increase in negative behaviours from the public to staff since the pandemic?



Most GPs felt that there had been an increase in negative behaviours.

6 practices gave further details:

Most of these mentioned some element of *frustration* from patients, with some comments around people having high expectations on the service, being more demanding, less patience and behaving as if there was not a pandemic.

Some of the behaviours mentioned were increased aggression, there were individual comments around refusing to wear face masks, lying about covid symptoms to gain a consultation and physically aggressive towards property.

One surgery gave some examples of what has been said to their reception team:

- “The doctors aren’t working they are just drinking tea”
- “It will be your fault if I die”
- “You always get it wrong”
- “You never answer the phones”
- “Why can’t I come in to see a doctor the whole thing is stupid”

- “Can’t get through on the phones you just ignore them”

One practice commented:

“In general practice we have not only come to work throughout the pandemic but we have worked many, many additional hours including weekends and bank holidays over the months so for people to make comments about their perception that we are not here, we are not open or we are not doing anything is a little soul destroying when everyone in general practice has been working so hard to keep our patients safe for the best part of the last year.”

One surgery that answered “no” made further comments: “PUBLIC -understanding – once explained procedures then happy.”

If yes, to which job roles?

All practices that answered “yes” agreed that the majority of negative behaviour is towards the reception team.

Other roles that were also mentioned were the clinician team (nurses and GPs) and admin teams.

Have you noted any themes or trends that people are unhappy with when contacting the practice ?

The main area that surgeries noted were:

Access and consultations:

Some of the areas that surgeries raised as themes were:

- Wanting more face to face consultations
- Difficulty getting through to the surgery or having to call many times
- Phone consultations
- Having to wait for call backs (with no specific time frame)

Communications and vaccination enquiries:

- Vaccination – enquiries, questions and patients wanting to book appointments at the surgery
- Battling misinformation on social media, in the press and changes in policy

Other areas noted were:

Availability of treatments:

- Not being able to access certain procedures or having to wait longer for referrals.

Operational Runnings:

- Patients not understanding why practices are running differently – such as why certain branches are closed for face to face appointments and patients are re-directed to other branches.
- Reductions in staffing (hospitals).

Do you have any suggestions to reduce these negative behaviours?

The main suggestion was Communications:

These suggestions covered more national / local communication regarding current pressures, implementations, responsibilities, changes to services and methods to increase trust in primary care. The comments are listed below:

- “There needs to be some strong Govt messages go out on the media - because I’m sure we are all affected by this - having spoken to some of my PM colleagues”

- “Better national communication. Patients think it’s the practice that wants to implement these changes and support from the government or local communication would be a great help.”
- “It would greatly assist Practices if we get advised of changes before we hear it on the BBC News! Recently, patients have been advising us of latest developments.”
- “More public communications explaining how stretched and busy the NHS is. We are staffing the Covid vaccination programme and cannot provide the same level of service as we did whilst trying to vaccinate the priority groups. “
- “I think it would be incredibly helpful if an organisation like yourselves were to run some kind of campaign asking patients to a) put some faith in their GP practice and b) understand that this is a national issue and that we are beholden to NHSE and the current Government.”

Other suggestions:

- “Patient education on self-care including not leaving prescriptions until the last minute”
- “Contract change with NHSE so that when Oxford vaccines are more available, Practices are able to deliver them as we do our flu campaigns and have them on-site for elderly / housebound patients who cannot get to Derby Arena”

Any other comments ?

Other areas raised that haven’t already been addressed.

- People reluctant to come to into surgery so are delaying smears

Vaccination Queries

Have you had many enquiries regarding the covid vaccination?

All surgeries answered yes.

Some comments were:

- “50% of calls are with regards to the vaccine. This is made more difficult by the Reception team trying to call out to book elderly patients in for their jab.”
- “We are constantly inundated with calls about the vaccines”
- “Far too many for us to be able to deal with.”

Some of the methods mentioned by the practices that they have done to communicate with their patients are:

- SMS messages sent out to explain NHS priorities
- Website changes
- Changing phone messaging

Have you noticed any themes or trends in: What people are asking?

Main theme noted was people are asking is “when will I get my vaccination”

Other areas that are being asked:

- Why can’t we have it at the surgery or more locally
- Asked to be put in a higher priority group
- People asking about eligibility and if they are vulnerable

- Demanding or refusing one of the vaccinations

Other individual comments

- Reluctant to have other vaccinations until they had their covid vaccination
- Why have others had it before them
- Bribes offered
- Can they pay privately
- Saying they are carers
- Effectiveness of different vaccines

***Have you noticed any themes or trends in:
The demographics of who is asking?***

Over this time period the practices stated that it is main demographics contacting them were:

- Elderly people / their carers or relatives.

Other demographics mentioned:

- All groups
- Key workers
- Under 70s – who feel they are at risk but do not meet government guidelines
- Over 50s
- BAME population

It was noted by a surgery whose patient cohort is largely BAME:

“Bigger concern is whether our wider community will take the vaccine. False news and anti-vax rumours not helpful. So, questions that are not being asked are the main worry!”

Healthwatch would like to thank all the practices that contributed to this report.