

Partnership Southwark Strategic Board

Primary Care Access & Experience

Response to Health and Scrutiny Commission report on 'Access to medical appointments'

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The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission review was conducted in response to constitutes reporting difficulties in accessing doctor appointments. Concerns were also raised that the pandemic had precipitated a switch to greater use of online and telephone consultations and members highlighted an increased wait time at emergency departments. The review resulted in 11 recommendations. Southwark Joint Commissioning Team has responded to each in turn with details of how the Community Based Care Borough team are working with Local Care Partnership colleagues to address each of them.

This response was then reviewed and commented on through the Partnership Southwark Strategic Board meeting on 7th September 2023. The scrutiny commission report was welcomed, and all the recommendations have been accepted for action or progress, with work noted in the response to the recommendations that follow.

1. Conduct a communication, engagement and outreach campaign explaining local integrated health services, where and when visit to Primary, Urgent and Emergency care, as well as services such as the Well-being Hub.

A local campaign is being developed, to include a range of new and existing options for accessing care, including Pharmacy First, the Southwark Wellbeing Hub, who provide information and support to anyone in Southwark who would like to improve their mental health and wellbeing, The Nest, which provides mental health support to Children and Young People (CYP) and other community 'Hub' services, delivering care at the weekend and evenings to improve access inc:

- Population health annual reviews
- Phlebotomy
- Centralised call/recall
- Cervical screening tests
- Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARC)
- Immunisations for Women's Health
- Wound Dressings
- NHS Health Checks
- Trans/Non-Binary/gender clinics

The Southwark immunisation leads recently teamed up with the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRs), who run a baby group in Elephant and Castle for Spanish speaking mothers. The members have faced various challenges, including poorer health outcomes and difficulties accessing primary care services, which often led to lower childhood vaccination rates and missed immunisations.

The team decided to address this by first identifying key concerns through an initial survey with LAWRS. This highlighted the group's confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of healthcare professionals involved in caring for them and their

children. This included expectations regarding early years support from Midwives, GPs, Practice Nurses, and Health Visitors. In response, the team organised two sessions and invited representatives from the four key healthcare professionals listed above, three of whom spoke Spanish and one where a translator was arranged to help communicate. The health professionals explained their roles and what parents could expect during early year, emphasizing the importance of the vaccination schedule.

This not only provided clarity on who to consult for specific concerns but also aimed to reduce the demand for GP appointments and encourage the use of specialised services like health visiting for child growth and development inquiries. Ultimately, this project empowered the group with valuable insights into healthcare professionals' roles in the UK and, hopefully, contributed to more efficient and informed healthcare utilisation.

In addition, Southwark practices and Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have committed to re-establish Patient Participation Groups, to seek the views of diverse communities and create opportunities for co-design of new services and pathways.

NHS England (NHSE) has set a target of October 2023 for all practices to opt-in to linking their patient list record to the NHS App. This will enable patients to book appointments and order repeat prescriptions. It will also give future functionality such the option to receive push-notifications of routine immunisations, screening appointments etc.

2. Seek to develop a more consistent practice appointment model based on best practice that will allow equitable and safe access for all.

The Borough team are working closely with PCNs on local delivery of the NHSE 'Implementing Modern General Practice' programme, which has committed £240m nationally to support practices and PCNs including:

- Using digital solutions to update current early morning telephone booking systems by supporting practices to move to Cloud Based Telephony (CBT) with the aim of 'beating the 8am rush'
- Providing a combination of face to face, telephone, and digital appointment systems through CBT & the roll out of the Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS). This includes funding for additional clinical and non-clinical practice staff
- Focusing on those with additional needs (mental health, disability, older, parents of young children, language barriers)

All of which will be informed by the views of the registered population.

CBT will allow:

- Call-back: patients have the option to be called back when they are higher in the queue
- Call-routing: patients will be directed to the right person or team (eg a medicines team serving the whole PCN)
- Integration with clinical systems: allows practice staff to quickly identify patients and find relevant information with less searching

3. Recognise and value the importance of GP Practice and Pharmacy receptionists, as well as other non-clinical staff and invest in guidance / training to ensure that they are appropriately guided and supported on how to screen patients.

- General Practice are being asked to complete the NHS Staff Survey for the first time this year and the Borough team have worked locally to encourage uptake. The survey will go out Oct and the results will be available early Spring.
- Locally supporting Southwark practices to access NHSE 'Support Level Framework', which aims to upskill and build confidence in existing workforce, including non-clinical roles.
- Expanding the role of health and wellbeing coaches – who support people to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to become active participants in their care.
- A delivery group has been established to bring together system partners, seeking to deliver joined up health and social care through an integrated neighbourhood team (INT) model.
- Local 'training hub' developing a Southwark Workforce Strategy

4. Build on local and national good practice to ensure triage systems result in the allocation of appointment based on patient need. Systems to support proactive and coordinated care for those with complex problems and long-term conditions need to be considered alongside.

Local commitment to 'Care-Coordinator' roles - personalised care professionals who help to provide capacity, and expertise to support patients in preparing for hospital appointments as well as following up conversations with clinical teams.

National training to support receptionists' triage and direct patients to the most appropriate primary care team member.

5. Finding a balance between face to face, telephone, and video appointments.

- Southwark is committed to offering all patients a range of options for accessing general practice, depending of preference and need
- Through INT delivery group, look at models which allow health and social care to work together to provide consistent care to patients with Long Term Conditions, versus those patients who are happy to see any of the team
- Use group consultations where appropriate as there is good evidence that this can lead to a peer support network for those with similar conditions.

6. Ensure all local surgery websites clearly indicate how patients can complain directly and how to escalate to commissioners if still unresolved.

- NHSE funding for website improvement is underway and being rolled out to all practices
- Continue to encourage patients to raise concerns to their practice in first instance and work with practices to use this as an opportunity for service improvement
- Following local audits, funding has been released to 23 out of 32 Southwark practices to improve their websites, including how patients use them to understand and navigate services

- All Southwark practices have shared their website evaluation reports with plans to review against a newly developed GP Website benchmarking tool which has been developed to identify opportunities for improvement.

7. Partnership Southwark, health scrutiny and Healthwatch to explore drawing up a template for councillors to report concerns as part of a protocol to guide relationships and share intelligence.

- Would welcome this approach as an opportunity for a 'feedback loop' so that any issues can be monitored for themes and responded to.
- Would also be keen to help MPs and councillors understand what is helpful to raise and what can be resolved without need for escalation - an example of which was a complaint regarding a practice declining to vaccinate a nine-month-old baby against MMR. This resulted in significant email traffic for the borough team to manage but a quick 'Google' would show that due to national policy, this is not something individual practices can deviate from.

8. Note the importance of maximising GP continuity and ensuring adequate appointment time to carefully prescribe, identify contraindications and avoid mistakes.

Locally we are:

- Implementing INTs to allow more time for proactive, personalised care with support from a multidisciplinary team of professionals
- Working with Borough Training Hub to develop Workforce strategy to encourage more GPs to work in the Borough
- Focusing GP time on people with more complex needs, including, but not limited to, those with multiple long-term conditions
- INT will streamline access to integrated urgent care, same-day care, using data and digital technology to enable patients to quickly find the right support
- Building capacity into the system, based on local need by working alongside local partners - such as the voluntary, community and faith sector and local authorities - local people, and communities will make the role of GP less stressful and more fulfilling and hopefully avoid 'burnout'.

9. Seek to recruit and retain more GPs to Southwark and other new Primary Care roles.

There is a national programme currently whereby NHSE are building capacity by focusing on:

- Funding larger multidisciplinary teams
- Training more new doctors
- Focusing on retention and return of experienced GPs

In addition, Southwark is utilising ARRS roles to develop a large and varied team, with roles including:

- Apprentice nurse associates
- Health Care Assistants
- Nurse associates
- Community paramedics

- Advanced nurse practitioners
- Clinical Pharmacists
- Mental health practitioners
- Social prescribers
- First contact physiotherapists
- Physician's Associates
- Care coordinators

10. Increase focus on continuity of care for people with enduring Mental Health conditions and particularly ensuring that there is good links with secondary care and referrals are followed through for those people who are least able to advocate for themselves.

- Southwark has a been delivering on the national Community MH Transformation (CMHT) prog. for 2.5 years and has made good progress in ensuring we deliver the national core offer, as well as developing services based on local need
- Programme team is made up of colleagues from across the LCP to develop joined up working and pathways between primary, secondary and the voluntary sectors.
- System working between PC and South London and Maudsley (SLaM), the local acute mental health trust, to develop new 'MH Practitioner' roles, aligned to general practice to reduce waiting times and increase access to MH services.
- Redefined SLaM community teams, so they align with General Practice and work in an MDT model
- Leading to increase in early intervention for patients with low to moderate MH needs, avoiding escalation
- New community roles, sitting alongside Social Prescribing, to support residents with non-clinical needs, employed by the charity sector, in an example of LCP working.

11. Partnership Southwark to initiate a project with local surgeries working with the local voluntary and community sector to develop a more proactive and holistic model of good health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on increasing social connection.

With support from Partnership Southwark, Pembroke House is working through Walworth Living Room to undertake community research, testing and learning into how Walworth neighbours can develop a social model for health co-produced to build the collective resources, strategic partnerships, tools and capacities to make systemic shifts in the neighbourhood's experience of health and wellness by strengthening trust, connections and interdependence. The work is at an early stage and will have lessons that will be applicable to other areas and neighbourhoods in Southwark.

The Borough team have been working jointly with Public Health to use a health promotion van, targeting areas of deprivation and inequality, partnering with VCSEs to bring access to primary preventative health care to the public, including blood pressure checks, BMI checks, information about services - empowering patients to access the right people at the right time as opposed to defaulting to their GP.

In addition, using a Health Promotion Grant to work with 10 VCSEs in Southwark who work with service groups with historically lower vaccination rates. Providing information and resources to support organisations to promote childhood vaccinations in particular: MMR, Flu and Polio. Sessions to explain roles & responsibilities of different healthcare professionals and linking in nearby practice nurses to speak at events where possible.

The above areas will be supported by the north and south PCNs, which have been developing over the last few years and include:

Leadership

- One PCN Clinical Director (CD) within each of the nine ‘neighbourhoods’
- Each neighbourhood team has an understanding of their local population
- Supported by a leads(succession planning and development)
- Supported by GP Federation administration and management capacity

Governance structures

- Neighbourhood meetings led by PCN CDs
- PCN Overseeing group - holds PCN CDs to account following national guidance
- PCN delivery Group - 'doing group' that supports PCN CDs and OSG
- Primary Care Collaborative – with Southwark Joint Borough team to develop new ways of working and deliver improvements in primary care.

Current challenges as well as opportunities within the system were also identified:

Risks	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough team capacity • Current system financial position – spending freeze estimated to be in place until Dec 2023 • Recruitment to ARRS roles – has been challenging due to various reasons so gaps remain in key roles • Industrial Action within the acute providers, leading to increased waiting times for patient appointments • Secondary care provider capacity to meet increased demand following the introduction of self-referral pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwark is a London Living Wage (LLW) borough – addressing social value as part of employment, new contracts and procurements • Employment opportunities for local people with ARRS roles • New, innovative patient pathways • Integrated working across organisations in the Local Care Partnership

However, the Borough team will continue to work hard with system colleagues to deliver innovative ways to improve care and increase access to medical appointments for Southwark residents.