

During September 2017 we visited 41 GP Practices across South Tees.

We provided them with our new contact details and information leaflets, anticipating that this information will be displayed throughout every practice in the area, so that patients are aware of our role and have access to our Information and Signposting service.

In addition to distributing Healthwatch promotional material, we also circulated Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA) leaflets and posters to all the practices across South Tees.




During our visits, we used this as an opportunity to identify:

- 1 What information is being displayed in the waiting rooms, especially for more vulnerable patients.
- 2 Different methods of communication in the practice.
- 3 How patients with hearing loss book appointments.

We discovered...



2 Different ways patients are called to their appointments:

-  29 via TV monitor
-  10 via verbal calls from staff
-  2 via buzzer

34 practices have at least one TV monitor in the waiting room.

3

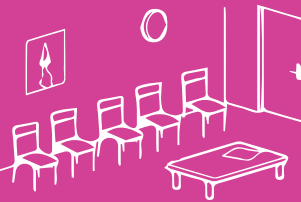


Only 5 practices have a text service for patients with hearing loss to book appointments independently.

And an additional 4 practices have a text talk interpreter system.

We asked practices who do not have a text service or text talk system how patients with hearing loss can make an appointment. Methods available are online booking or for a relative / carer to make appointment on a patients behalf.

We also observed that 22 practices have an automatic check in facility (6 of which did not have hand-gel available).



Our observations and recommendations

Although we informed GP practices that we would be visiting them, we found that the majority of the frontline staff were unaware that we would be attending and were also unsure of our role. As we have a statutory duty to provide information about health and social care services, we recommend that we develop a closer working relationship with practices and provide support to ensure staff are informed about Healthwatch. We would also like to work with Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) to ensure that patients receive up to date and relevant information, particularly the most vulnerable patients and would appreciate a collaborative working approach to facilitate this.

We noted that many practices have monitors in the waiting area that display information to patients, we have found that this is often the easiest way for patients to receive information. We would like to explore the possibility of using this method of informing patients about Healthwatch and other services.

We appreciate that at the time of our visits, most practices were promoting the flu campaign therefore some posters and leaflets had been removed temporarily. However, we recommend that certain information should remain permanently displayed, such as how to access support services for carers and those affected by dementia.

Although we observed that 27 practices had hand gel, this figure may be higher as in a lot of cases it was difficult to locate. We received some feedback from patients who informed us of their reluctance to use the automatic check in screen where there was no hand gel available. We recommend that all practices provide hand gel in the waiting area, ensuring it is easy to access for patients. For example, in one surgery the hand gel was located next to the automatic check in and a notice was displayed to advise patients to use it after checking in.

Next steps

We are currently looking into how patients with hearing loss can make appointments at their GP surgery. This is ongoing and we will share our findings and patient feedback in the future. Please get in touch if you have anything to share with us regarding this issue.

We will be revisiting all GP practices over the next 12 months. We request that all promotional material provided for Healthwatch and ICA is displayed in a visible and accessible area for patients. Please get in touch if you require further information or promotional material from us.



☎ 0800 989 0080 / 01642 955605

@ general@healthwatchsouthtees.org.uk

healthwatch
Middlesbrough

healthwatch
Redcar and Cleveland