

Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
19th February 2024 Meeting

Access to GP Appointments

This meeting was attended by Simon Trickett, Chief Executive of Integrated Care Board (ICS), NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire along with Lynda Dando, Director of Primary Care NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire and Dr Roy Williams.

Over 5.5 million appointments are delivered in General Practice across Herefordshire and Worcestershire every year. This is 19% more appointments than before COVID-19 pandemic. – *there was no information how many face-to-face and how many telephone consultations!*

They presented a comparative data highlighting best access to and experience of primary care:

Question	Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS	National
% pf patients reporting that it was easy to get through to the GP practice by telephone	56% (Rank 7/42)	50%
% of patients rating their overall experience of making an appointment as good	61% (Rank 6/42)	54%
% of patient rating their overall experience with their GP practice as good	76% (Rank 6/42)	71%

However, there was a significant variation and not all patients have the same experience:

Question	Best	Worst
% of patients reporting that it was easy to get through to the GP practice by telephone	98%	25%
% of patients rating their overall experience of making an appointment as good	96%	35%
% of patients rating their overall experience with their GP practice as good	98%	54%

% do not add up!

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Primary Care Access Recovery Plan

This plan has two central ambitions:

- To tackle the 8 am rush
- To enable patients to know on the day they contact their practice how their request will be managed.

The plan focusses on four key areas to deliver the main ambitions and to support recovery:

- Empower patients to manage their own health including using the NHS App, Self-referral pathways and via more services offered from Community Pharmacy.

- Implement modern general practice access to tackle 8 am rush, provide rapid assessment and response and avoid asking patients to ring back for an appointment.
- Build capacity to deliver more appointments from more staff and add flexibility to the types of staff recruited.
- Cut bureaucracy and reduce the workload across the interface between primary and secondary care so that practices have more time to meet the clinical needs of their patients.

There was a discussion on expanding community pharmacy which include:

- Community Pharmacist Consultation Service
- Common conditions
- Independent Prescriber Pathfinder Programme
- Blood pressure
- Oral contraception
- Discharge medicines.

Significant Challenges

- Patient satisfaction rates are declining – satisfaction rates fell by 10% in 2022 across 85% of local GP practices, including “experience of making an appointment”.
- Despite 19% more appointments this is not enough to meet current levels of demand.
- GP workforce is shrinking – leaver rate 10%, joiner rate 8.9%.
- However, a new grade called Medical Physician Associates are being appointed who will take some of the load from the GPs.

Problems in Worcestershire

- More of our residents rely on telephone contact rather than online.
- 40% of the people who live in affluent areas find it difficult to access as compared to 51% of people in deprived area.
- People who were unable to get GP appointment, almost a third (31%) went to A&E.
- 68% decided to try 111, however we have no data how many landed in A&E.

Report from Bromsgrove District Council’s Representative on Worcestershire HOSC, Councillor B. Kumar