



GP Access in the London Borough of Bromley

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Methodology

- Healthwatch Bromley carried out a research project visiting all **47 GP surgeries in the borough**. A total of **409 surveys** from all 47 surgeries. In separate focus groups a further **80 service users** were engaged
- Authorised Enter & View Representatives gathered information through a standardised questionnaire and via informal conversations with service users
- The questionnaire consisted of a total of **24 questions** on a range of issues including:
 - opening hours
 - appointment availability
 - access issues
- Further targeted research with:
 - Bromley College of Further and Higher Education,
 - Bromley Sparks and
 - Deaf Access.



Key Findings

- Most people were 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with opening hours
- Frustration with the booking system
- Difficulties with obtaining appointments
- Surgery times, appointment slots and opening hours were often confused by patients.
- Number of actual appointments available were significantly lower than perceived
- Overall additional support needs were rarely catered for, with patients not having clear access to additional services such as translators or signers.
- Patient Participation Groups were overwhelming unknown to Bromley residents, with only 13% of respondents confirming that their surgery offered such engagement opportunities.



Opening Hours vs. Surgery Times

- The difference between opening times and the first and last bookable appointments emerged as an area of confusion. For example, many surgeries had an opening time of 8.30 but the first bookable appointment was not until 9.20 or later, with the last appointment of the morning finishing around 11.00. Similarly, over half the surgeries did not resume appointments until mid-afternoon despite remaining 'open.'
- Furthermore, there seemed to be a lack of consistency in surgery times, especially with regards to commuter clinics and Saturday mornings, and notably, from doctor-to-doctor.



Booking Preferences

- Of those surveyed only 10% of people were able to book their preferred appointment time and 15% were able to book a named GP.
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- 31% of respondents reported appointments having been cancelled or rescheduled. In the event of this:
 - only 17% reported being signposted to other available services
 - as few as 5% received a telephone consultation
 - 14% did not seek any further treatment or consultation



Accessibility and Additional Support

- 3% of respondents stated that their GP had inquired as to whether they had any additional support requirements. With 97% of respondents stating that they had never been asked or had refrained from answering.
- When asked if any additional assistance was needed in accessing GP services, 5 respondents ticked translation services, and 4 British Sign Language. Of those who suggested such services might be useful, less than half reported receiving them.



Patient Engagement and Feedback

37% of respondents stated there was no opportunity or facility to provide feedback on their experience and they had never been asked to provide their opinion on their local practice.

Just over 140 people were aware that they could use the Comment Box in their practice to give feedback.

- Only 13% of respondents said that their surgery offered a Patient Participation Group.
- 19% expressed an interest in joining such groups. There is an active need to encourage patient participation and promote alternative mechanisms through which to do so.



In their own words ...

“The surgery could do with more doctors in the evenings. Callers who queue in person get preferred appointments, so even when you call first thing you can end up with a 10:00 slot.”

“If I have had a quite serious problem I always end up at the minor injury clinic as I can't get an appointment at the surgery.”

“There are not enough doctors therefore you have to book a doctor's appointment about 2 weeks in advance.”

“The appointment system is incomprehensible and it would be good to have a doctor you know. You appear to be a computer record.”

“There are often long waiting times at the surgery even though timed appointments have been booked.”

