**MARCH 2014 – Local Patient Participation Report – Dr Reidy & Partners.**

Thank you to all members of the Patient Participation Group, which in Department of Health speak appears to have been renamed the Patient Reference Group.

Taking into account the thoughts and recommendations of the PRG we included in this years survey questions about the complaints system, surgery opening times, consultation by telephone triage and online services.

The survey was quite long and covered a lot. We will return to some of its findings at a later date, but in this report we will concentrate on the headline results, which we believe, are of most interest to our patients.

A summary of the full report is available should a member of the PRG wish to see it.

Our survey started by looking at Reception and the ease (or otherwise) of getting appointments.

The results were encouraging, although we know there are times, usually, around 8:30 – 9:00 in the morning when the telephones are busy and appointments get booked up quickly, but the results indicate 66% of patients can get through easily or fairly easily.

No matter how hard we try we cannot get patients to spread their requests for appointments more evenly throughout the day. We do understand why, but we still wish to find a way avoiding the “early morning rush”. Telephone triage may play a part, but more of that later.

Q1. How helpful do you find the receptionist at your GP practice?

90% of respondents said Very Helpful or Fairly Helpful.

Q2. How easy is it to get through to someone at your GP practice on the ‘phone.

Although it nice to see that 66% can get through Fairly or Very Easily, the sizable 31% who say it is Not Very Easy to get through on the ‘phone indicate that there is still work to do on this front.

Q3. How easy is it to speak to a doctor or nurse on the phone at your GP practice?

68% of respondents say it is Very Easy or Fairly Easy to speak to the doctor or nurse on the telephone, and this is a service we wish to encourage.

Q4. If you need to see a GP urgently, can you normally get seen on the same day?

This is one of the really important measures. It is good to see that 88% of respondents found it Very Easy, Fairly Easy or had not tried to see a doctor urgently. The 12% who report it is Not at all Easy or Not Very Easy are a concern, and further work is to be done to understand why these patients found it difficult to be seen urgently.

Q5. How important is it to you to be able to book appointments ahead of time?

The principal of being able to book ahead is well established, and is important to patients.

Q6. How easy is it to book ahead in your practice?

69% of respondents find it Very Easy or Easy to book ahead, but there is more work to do for the 25% who do not.

Suggestions for improving this rating would be welcome.

Q7. How do you normally book your appointments at the practice?

Perhaps not surprisingly the telephone remains the most popular means of booking appointments, although use of the online facility at 5% does register, and does appear to be growing.

Q8. Which of the following methods would you prefer to use to book appointments at the practice?

At 23%, this would indicate that patients will use online in increasing numbers, and we are aware that we will have to ensure there are sufficient appointment slots available. This in itself brings challenges, especially if we are to ensure that face-to-face appointments are used when necessary – see Q40 and use of triage.

Q9. How quickly do you usually get seen, if booking for your preferred doctor?

These results need to be assessed alongside those for Q11 – How quickly are you seen if you are willing to see any doctor.

Q11. How quickly do you usually get seen, if you are willing to see any doctor?

It would appear that while 51% of respondents are able to see their doctor of choice the same day or next day, and some (14%) are willing to wait 5 days or more, if a patient needs to see a doctor urgently, we do manage to satisfy that need in 83% of cases. We also manage to see 97% of patients requesting an urgent appointment within 4 days.

Now, turning to more general matters:

Q15. Is your practice currently open at times that are convenient to you.

An overwhelming 91% appear satisfied with our opening times.

This is often an issue that gets press coverage, and various Government directives include initiatives to get doctors to open earlier, later or at weekends. It is worth mentioning that of those who expressed a preference many said they would like to see the practice open after 6:30 pm, before 8:00 am and on Saturdays. Going forward we will assess the needs of patients, but against the background of 91% satisfaction with present arrangements we will not make changes without an assessment of patients real preferences.

Q37. Are you aware of how to make a complaint?

In surgery we tend to think that anyone who wants to complain will know what to do. This does not appear to be the case. We do hope that the vast majority of our patients never have cause to complain, but there is a need to increase awareness of the current arrangements, so we will include this in our action plan for next year.

Q40. About the triage system. Have you used it and how did it work for you?

Triage is a system whereby doctors talk to patients on the telephone and make an assessment of their condition. Patients are then called in for an emergency appointment, invited to make a routine appointment at a convenient time or have their request dealt with over the telephone (if it just requires advice or perhaps a prescription). Many surgeries are moving towards such systems as a way of handling the increasing number of requests for appointments.

Research suggests that 30% of face-to-face appointments could be dealt with over the telephone. Our respondent group on this question was small, but the indications are that a significant number of face-to-face consultations could be avoided, which should bring benefits to doctors and patients.

We have been trialing the system at our Desborough and Hazlemere surgeries on Monday mornings. We intend extending it to Fridays at Desborough.

It is early days, and the way forward is not clear, but this is an area that we will be looking at in detail over the coming months.

We will be very pleased to receive feedback from patients on their experience of using the system.

Q43. Are you aware you can book routine appointments online?

Online appointments were only introduced last year. The number of patients registering is growing and we expect the number of consultations booked this way to increase.

It does bring with it a challenge about how to give the convenience of online booking alongside the need to save face-to-face consultations for those who really need them.

Q44. Are you aware that you can now request repeat prescriptions online?

Like Q43 this was a question to test our effectiveness in publicising the introduction of online services. It appears we have made a good start.

Summary

You practice thinks we can take a lot of comfort from the findings of the Patient Survey.

We continue to encourage new members to join our Patient Reference Group, and we look forward to receiving input from members in 2014-15.

Our plans for next year are to explore in more depth why some patients say they cannot get an urgent appointment easily, publicise the complaints system more widely and gauge the success, or otherwise, of the triage system. This may include extending the trial further at one or both sites.

Input from the PRG and patients generally on these matters is always welcome.