

Leicester City Clinical Commissioning Group
Report on Access to General Practice in Leicester City

Summary

1. Access to general practice services remains a priority focus both locally and nationally. The CCG is working to ensure practices are open and services are available during core hours.
2. In addition to services provided by GP practices, the CCG commission four primary care extended access hubs in the city, to allow patients the opportunity to access services when their GP practice is closed.
3. Access to services should be viewed against the backdrop of increasing demand for general practice services and the challenges of that demand.

Background

4. There are 57 GP practices in the city providing primary care services. As part of their contract for provision, practices are required to be available to meet the reasonable needs of patients between 8am and 6:30pm Monday – Friday.
5. GP practices provide appointments outside these hours for their patients as part of Extended Hours Directed Enhanced Service (DES). 39 practices in the city offer extended hours appointments, usually in the early morning, evenings or on Saturday morning. These appointments can be with a doctor or nurse, are available on a pre-bookable basis for registered patients of the individual practice. The number of appointments commissioned depends on the practice list size.
6. As well as the core hours and DES arrangements, there are other ways of accessing primary care services in the city. The CCG commissions primary care access hubs across four sites, providing evening and weekend pre-bookable appointments. At one site walk-in appointments are also available. There are also national initiatives proposed such as services via the NHS app.

Access and meeting the reasonable needs of patients

7. The CCG is required to ensure access to primary care services meet the reasonable needs of patients. Reasonable need is not specifically defined in the primary care contract, however NHS England have given some guidance about what constitutes reasonable need. These are listed below:
 - Booking or cancelling appointments
 - Collecting and ordering prescriptions
 - Accessing urgent appointments and services
 - Accessing a home visit (if clinically appropriate)
 - Ringing for telephone advice

- Being referred or signposted to other services
 - Accessing test results
8. The CCG recognises patient experience in the city, measured yearly by the GP Patient Survey, is below the national average. Concentrating on understanding access arrangements will help to improve patient experience in future years.
 9. With the above in mind, the CCG has recently started a piece of work looking more closely at whether practices are meeting reasonable need. This comprised of looking at practice submissions detailing when they were open, reviewing patient experience information and comments and complaints about access. Practice leaflets and websites were checked to make sure opening times were detailed consistently. ED data was reviewed to see if there was a pattern of high usage from patients of specific practices.
 10. The majority of practices in the city (46 out of 57 practices) were able to demonstrate a clear pathway for access during core hours. This meant they were open during the core hours period, and if they were not open there were clear arrangements in place for patients to be seen.
 11. Eleven practices were identified as being unable to clearly demonstrate a robust pathway or were found to be closed for periods during core hours.
 12. Practice visits are now underway with these eleven practices, to test access arrangements in more detail. Following completion of the visits the CCG will take a view about whether the arrangements are acceptable or not. There is the possibility of applying contractual sanctions to practices whose arrangements are not satisfactory, or giving practices an opportunity to revise and review their arrangements, following feedback from the CCG.
 13. Other ways of accessing GP services are available, it is important to note the development of the NHS app for example. The intention is to give patients access to healthcare advice and self- care through a single, convenient mobile app. The national roll out of the app will happen between April and June 2019.

Extended access to primary care services

14. The CCG commissions extended access to primary care services via primary care 'hubs' in the city. This service forms part of a national initiative to improve access to primary care in the evenings and at weekends. The location and times of the services are:

Location	Times and Days
Westcotes Health Centre	8am – 8pm every day
Saffron Lane Surgery	6:30pm – 10pm weekdays 12:30pm – 8pm weekends and bank holidays
Belgrave Health Centre	6:30pm – 10pm weekdays 12:30pm – 8pm weekends and bank holidays

15. Patients can book appointments via their GP practice during core hours and via NHS 111 in the evenings and at weekends.

16. The contract for this service commenced on 1st July 2018 and runs for a three year period. DHU (local out of hours provider) and one of the GP federations in the city (Leicester City Health) provide the service.

17. The service is funded via General Practice Forward View investment which is broken down as follows:

Year		Total contract value	10% Element based on KPI
Year 1	Fixed funding	£1,655,000	£165,500
Year 2	Fixed funding	£1,655,000	£165,500
Year 3	Fixed funding	£1,655,000	£165,500

18. The primary care hubs add 1208 appointments into the system per week.

19. The CCG also commissions a fourth hub at Merlyn Vaz Health and Social Care Centre. This service also offers pre-bookable as well as walk-in appointments.

20. The contract for this service started on 1st October 2017, the contract term is 3 years, with an option to extend for a further 2 years.

21. This is a separate CCG funded contract, provided by DHU and Leicester City Health GP federation. The funding for this service is as follows:

Year		Total contract value
Year 1	Fixed funding	£795,000
Year 2	Fixed funding	£795,000
Year 3	Fixed funding	£795,000
The contract extension will be subject to review by Leicester City CCG		
Year 4	Fixed funding	£734,000
Year 5	Fixed funding	£734,000

22. The service at Merlyn Vaz Health and Social Care Centre provides 2000 appointments into the system per month.

23. A recent patient experience project conducted by the CCG, which surveyed 63 patients from 25 of the city's practices, found that overall satisfaction with the service was good. The majority of patients reported they preferred to access the hubs in the evenings and at weekends because work or lifestyle commitments.

24. The patient experience project highlighted areas for improvement. Patients suggested the following:

- Minimise delays in clinics or inform patients if delays are likely

- Make male and female clinicians available during clinic times
- Make it clear to patients what the hub service is and how it works

Challenges to delivering access to primary care services

25. Whilst the CCG has a range of access options available for patients, it is clear that there is still some work to do. Practices report significant numbers of patients who Do Not Attend (DNA) their appointments for core services.

26. Work is underway to understand why patients DNA and to make it easier for patients to change or cancel appointments quickly. Text message reminders for appointments are now regularly used by practices across the city, and are about to start for extended access (hub) appointments

27. As an example DNA rates between July 2018 and October 2018 were are follows:

Month	Numbers of DNA at primary care 'hub' per month
July 2018	342
August 2018	247
September 2018	439
October 2018	582

28. A DNA appointment represents an appointment that could have been used by someone else, and is a waste of resource, making it an important area of focus.

29. Demand on general practice services is rising, due to an increase in the complexity and intensity of work at practice level. Population changes, including an increasingly ageing population who are likely to live longer have an impact on service demand. Patients over the age of 65 are most likely to use primary care services. Patient expectations and a growing culture of immediate access and answers also drive demand.

30. There is the impact of wider changes to services such as community nursing, mental health and care homes, which puts increasing pressure on GP practices.

31. National initiatives such as those detailed in General Practice Forward View (GPFV) are intended to help reduce both demand and pressure on general practice, by providing investment and support to help practices manage the challenges. It is clear though that this investment will take time to have the desired impact.

Conclusion

32. Access to primary care in Leicester city continues to be a focus for the CCG. The work to ensure practices are able to meet the reasonable needs of their patients is well advanced, with the majority of practices showing they are meeting that need. Practices who are not able to evidence a clear pathway for access are the subject of a more focussed approach by the CCG.

33. The CCG commissions extended access to primary care as part of a nationally funded scheme, which shows good patient satisfaction with services overall. The CCG will continue to manage and monitor the effect of those services, working with the provider to ensure patient experience remains good.

34. The CCG recognises the challenges facing primary care in terms of demand for services. The CCG will support and implement national initiatives detailed in GPFV to ensure practices have the support they need to manage demand effectively.