

Tamar Valley Health The Callington and Gunnislake Health Centres

Our thanks to all those patients who have participated in our on-going survey, and to the virtual Patient Patient Group (vPPG), an on-line group, who helped with the questions and reviewed the responses. The composition of the group is shown below.

Ages	Under 16	17-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	Over 84
<i>Males:</i>		1		1	2	1	9		
<i>Females:</i>		1		2	3	10	5	2	
Ethnic groups	White/British:		White/'Other'						
<i>Males:</i>	13		1						
<i>Females:</i>	22		1						

We would like more patients to join our PPG, especially those who could widen the representation.

The responses for January and February are shown below and include some comments. Where we have replied to these, the practice answer is *shown in italics*.

As a result of your feedback, we have made some changes. Please join the vPPG and/or take part in future surveys as we welcome your feedback and support.

It is worth noting that we have an above-average number of doctor hours for our patient numbers (16,700) and are not understaffed. It is challenging trying to meet the needs of an ageing population, especially in a rural area, and we are not always able to meet the requirements of all our patients. However, we like to think that we try very hard!

PAGE: JANUARY 2012

1. Which Health Centre do you use?

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Callington: 30.4% (14)
Gunnislake: 69.6% (32)
(46 people answered this question)

2. In the last 12 months, approximately how often have you visited or phoned your Health Centre?

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No calls or visits: 2.2% (1)
Only a few times: 43.5% (20)
About once a month: 39.1% (18)
More often than once a month: 15.2% (7)

(46 people answered this question)

Comments:

Frequent visits are required as I am informed that only 5 discussion points may be raised per consultation. *It must be difficult when you have a number of health problems that you need to raise. Unfortunately the GPs and nurses have limited time if they are to try and keep to their scheduled appointments so may have to deal with the most pressing problems on the day and ask you to come back again at a later date to deal with the rest.*

Currently about every 3 weeks for blood tests and blood pressure monitoring/controlling

Usual visit is to pharmacy to pick up repeat prescription

6monthly diabetes check-up.

mainly to collect prescriptions

Mainly just to pick up repeat prescriptions

Always dealt with perfectly lovely staff.

mostly calling to collect prescription

3. If you have phoned your Health Centre, how easy have you found it getting through to a receptionist?



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Usually very easy: 24.4% (11)

Usually easy: 33.3% (15)

Difficult at times: 26.7% (12)

Very difficult at times: 15.6% (7)

Haven't phoned: 0% (0)

(45 people answered this question, 1 person skipped it)

Comments:

Access can vary depending on the time of day the phone call is made, which is understandable. Receptionists are always polite and helpful.

You need to have the telephone message to hold on at all times. It can take up to 45 mins otherwise to get through

The message before 11.00am asks that requests for routine appointments and test results be made after 11.00am in order to keep the phone lines free for people needing home visits and urgent appointments and advice. Patients can, of course, hold on before 11.00am but it would be very helpful if such calls could be made later in the day.

Never got to a receptionist directly. Have to go through recorded messages before be put on wait for receptionist

Strongly dislike call queue. Would prefer to re-dial if busy rather than holding onto the phone for an indefinite period.

We sorry that you find this inconvenient. The reason for this is that a receptionist may be called away from her station to deal with something – for example, a doctor may want an urgent fax sent to a hospital. This type of phone system enables the receptionist to switch off her phone temporarily and any calls will then be rerouted to a colleague rather than ringing unanswered at her empty desk.

Girls are most helpful

Find it easier to make an appointment over the counter when I am passing the Surgery

I find that between 8.30 am - 9.00am I have no chance of getting through to speak to a receptionist which can be frustrating if I need an appointment for that day for myself or children, as any free appointments are very often gone by the time I can get through.

We do have additional staff taking calls at this time because of the marked increase in calls but very much regret that we find it difficult on some days to keep up with demand.

Receptionists have not always had a good telephone manner - appear cold and uncaring.

This has been fed back to the reception team who were dismayed that some of them have come across this way. I hope that you will find an improvement.

Usually easier to drive to the centre and make an appointment over the counter

Again always polite helpful and never appear to hurry you even if busy.

Depends on time of day you call - early morning can be difficult

Being put on hold is not usually for too long, but some call centres give an idea of how many people are in the queue which can be helpful, rather than holding for say, 10 mins, before deciding to ring off & try again later.

Unfortunately our phone system, although modern and complex, is unable to offer this facility.

4. In the last 12 months, how often have you been able to book the consultation you wanted?

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GP pre-booked consultation:

Always 42.5% (17) Most of the time 32.5% (13) Rarely 15.0% (6)

Not Applicable 10.0% (4)

(46 people answered this question)

5. Each patient has a named doctor and is asked to see him or her when available. How do you feel about this?

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I like it 80.0% (36) I dislike it 8.9% (4)

I have no feelings either way 11.1% (5)

(45 people answered this question, 1 person skipped it)

Comments:

Continuity of advice and treatment is all important

Doctor rarely available

Why has my named doctor been changed so often? I would have preferred a bit of continuity
Unfortunately we have had a number of changes in recent years, mainly due to retirements (Drs Kratky, Tilbury and Stewart). We all value continuity and are hoping for a more settled spell this year.

The G.P. with whom I am registered Dr. Cole, cannot be contacted by external medical services as her name is not included with the other G.Ps. This has made accessing treatment prescribed by consultants, extremely difficult, and on many occasions the requests of consultants have not been initiated due to letters and reports being sent to the wrong GP. Also the Gunnislake Health Centre address is not available to external medical agencies.

Gunnislake Health Centre receives a large volume of paper and electronic post each day, part of which is addressed to Dr Cole, so it isn't clear why this problem has arisen.

It is essential to see someone who knows you. The locums not always helpful

It must save the doctor and patient time, in not having to read the "notes" prior to consultation or in the consultation, though I have my doubts if this is done by some of the "locums" I have consulted.

The practice tries not to employ locums but there are times when it is unavoidable. Please let us know if you ever have a specific concern about an individual doctor.

If one has one doctor then hopefully that doctor has a better understanding of the patient. However there is always the possibility that another doctor may see a problem or a better solution to a

essential for continuity when suffering chronic conditions

Because I have an exceptional GP. Wouldn't like it if mine was less good or professional

I much prefer to see my own Doctor as I feel my comfortable with them.

Essential for continuity of care.

I also will accept that if I need an urgent appointment I am happy to see who ever is available

It is a good thing to know your doctor and to establish a relationship with him / her.

Patients also have the right to see any Dr in the practice but may be unaware of this and it is not promoted by reception staff who can be rather obstructive.

This comment has been passed back to the receptionists who would normally offer an alternative if your own doctor was not available.

in principle it's a good idea but I like some of the other doctors better and probably don't go often enough to be remembered.

It gives continuity and helps to build up confidence.

I like having my own dr as you get to know them (although have yet to meet Dr Stewart's replacement). But have never minded seeing another dr they are all lovely!

Most of the time it is better to see the same doctor for consistency and them being aware of patient history; but there are occasions where seeing a different doctor might be preferred eg particularly sensitive medical conditions, getting a different perspective on treatment.

But it is extremely difficult to see named doctor at short notice (within the week), usually up to 7-8 working days, I personally usually end up with my doctor's 'buddy' who is excellent, but this tends to offer a closer doctor/patient relationship with the 'buddy' rather than first named GP.

Our doctors do liaise over patients and the 'buddy' system is designed to help support continuity of care. The NHS promotes Family Friendly working patterns and many of our GPs are not able to work fulltime.

6. Are you aware that the practice offers pre-bookable appointments for patients who either work during the day or who rely for transport on people who work? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

Late surgery one evening a week:
Yes 78.6% (33) No 21.4% (9)

Saturday morning surgeries
Yes 86.4% (38) No 13.6% (6)
(44 people answered this question, 2 people skipped it)

7. Thinking about your Health Centre, are you: [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

Very satisfied 41.3% (19) Fairly satisfied 37.0% (17)
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 8.7% (4) Fairly dissatisfied 13.0% (6)
Very dissatisfied 0.0% (0)
(46 people answered this question)

Comments:

Compared with other health centres used in the past (out of county), the Callington centre is several points higher.

Waiting times very long, usually at least 30 minutes behind time, have waited 45 minutes to see a nurse with no explanation. Reception/telephone staff can be rude. Pharmacy not very efficient, pharmacy staff also can be rude although pharmacist himself very good

We're sorry that you have had such bad experiences for which we can only apologise. The doctors and nurses try very hard to run to time, as they find it stressful when running late.

There are many occasions where the G.P. care has been negligent and dismissive, resulting in external medical agencies righting this care. This has consequently led to delayed treatment, with extensive time frames, that are unacceptable in today's NHS.

We do have a formal complaints' procedure that we encourage patients to use if they feel that their care has been unsatisfactory. Please contact the Practice Manager or Deputy Practice Manager if you would like this matter investigated.

The main problem is booking blood tests which GP has said urgent also followup up appoints ALSO THE ANNUAL RECALL IS NOT WORKING FOR ME, I have left messages and emailed and have had to make own appointments

We can only apologise for any problems that you may have had and ask for more specific feedback to the recalls team so that they can improve the service that they are offering to the many thousands of patients whose recalls they monitor. The recalls' system is designed to provide an annual MOT and reduce the numbers of times that patients on repeat medication have to attend during the rest of the year.

The booking system is dreadful. Waiting for permission from a GP to be seen is frustrating. Have waited weeks for appt for a coil

When the practice is under pressure, the receptionists have to ask GPs how best to deal with requests for appointments when all the available slots have been filled. Sometimes patients can be helped by a phone call, for example, rather than having to go to their health centre. Each clinic has time limits because of the need for the GPs to spend time after each clinic dealing with referrals, phone calls, test results, post from the hospitals, reports, home visits for the ill housebound, etc. before they start the next session. The doctors and staff do try to accommodate every request, as we don't like unhappy patients any more than patients like being unhappy with us.

Bookings for contraceptive coils need special longer appointments and involve a member of the nursing team as well, and also have to fit in with the patient's monthly cycle, so can be complicated to arrange.

No complaints about medical staff. The dissatisfaction relates to contact difficulties, badly worded letters and designed web site. I also dislike being addressed by my first name by people who do not know me. Most, but not all, receptionists are good. I have encountered rudeness.

Your comments are being passed on to the team members responsible. Our web site is currently being redesigned and we hope to have the new one available in April. Comments about what changes are needed would be appreciated.

Incredibly long delays, waiting 40 minutes for an appointment is unacceptable. When you are feeling unwell it isn't nice to be waiting so long for an appointment. I had an appointment yesterday and I was waiting 40 minutes for my Doctor, there was no patient in their room as I watched them walk out and then the Doctor went to move their car which took more time, therefore making my wait longer. I was VERY unhappy at having to wait so long and will be seeing a different Doctor next time I need to see one.

Our apologies for what sounds like a frustrating experience. It is difficult to give an explanation without knowing the details. Doctors prefer to see patients promptly as it makes for easier and more pleasant consultations. The GPs have to field urgent calls from hospital colleagues, community nurses, paramedics, carers, and nursing and residential homes, and sometimes have to make urgent calls to the hospital for admissions etc. In a recent example, it took a GP over 40 minutes to deal with a seriously ill patient who had attended for a routine appointment, get through to the hospital and get assurance that the patient could be admitted, and then remain with the patient until they could be moved.

I have had a few problems with the pharmacy, not very efficient, seems to have gone downhill in the last year. Otherwise I am very satisfied with the health centre.

It is always helpful to have specific examples fed back to the practice when we don't meet your expectations: in this case, the new inefficiencies that you have noticed. Please feed them back to our pharmacists.

The only thing I feel dissatisfied about is 9/10 times the doctor is running late by at least 20 mins and I have been waiting up to 50 mins before, when I book in at reception I am never informed of this.
Your comments have been passed back to the receptionists to remind them of the need to do this.

Seems more impersonal than it used to be - probably due to 'business' orientation.
We prefer to have a personal rather than a business approach, although the practice has, in fact, always been a business. We'll try to do better.

Many Doctors are not available because they appear to have so much time off.
The majority of GPs now work part-time because of the demands of family life as well as other commitments such as medical posts elsewhere or, increasingly, the need to spend time at meetings as the responsibility for commissioning health switches to general practice. We do offer alternative GPs but if you can wait for your own GP to be available, we always support this to promote continuity of care.

I recently tried to use the BP facility but a man and a woman came and stood right up close to me, breathing down my neck, and watching. I found this very distressing, asked them to sit in waiting room, which they declined to do. Went to reception - BP now sky high - and complained. I then had appt to see nurse a couple of days later, and suggested screens around machine area, and a 'stand behind this mark' sign so that people couldn't get too close, and intimidate the patient at the machine.
Our apologies for your unfortunate experience. We have now put up signs asking patients to wait in the waiting room until the machines are free.

Staff are always helpful and polite, pharmacy can be slow and it gets crowded there sometimes.
Space is a constant problem for us at both health centres. Unfortunately, we cannot extend at present although we would like to be able to provide more services as well as additional space for existing ones.

Doctors apparently too busy to see patients for routine check-ups and reviews - instead delegate to pharmacist!
It's not that the doctors are too busy but rather that the practice, rather unusually, employs specialist pharmacists trained to do such reviews to ensure that patients' medication is best suited to their condition.

Always had excellent service

I dislike being asked what the problem is by a receptionist. I do feel if I refuse to answer that I will not get an appointment.
You will never be refused an appointment for not wanting to give a reason and you are completely within your rights to refuse to do so. However, the doctors are grateful when patients feel able to do this because it provides valuable information for them about the nature of the appointments booked with them and helps them plan their working patterns.

There is nothing in the survey about the way reception deals with calls, do people think that they ask for too much information, are people directed to the correct service (nurse, telephone appt etc.).
Patients providing information about their needs is enormously helpful as otherwise much patient and practice time is wasted by patients being given the wrong appointments. We will include your question about the accuracy of the receptionists' direction to various services in a later survey.

I like the way the practice picks up very quickly on health problems but it does feel like musical chairs with whom you see as a result

While we encourage patients to see their own doctors for certain types of appointments, it is not always appropriate for patients to wait for them and thus they may be asked to see other doctors.

I have nothing but praise for every aspect of my experiences with Gunnislake Health Centre. I am constantly surprised by the friendliness, efficiency, helpfulness and professionalism of every area with which I have experience.

We are delighted to be able to surprise you!

8. How old are you?

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17 or younger 4.3% (2) 18-24 4.3% (2) 25-34 2.2% (1) 35-44 4.3% (2)
45-54 13.0% (6) 55-64 23.9% (11) **65-74 45.7% (21)** 75-84 2.2% (1)
85 or older 0% (0)

(46 people answered this question)

9. Do you have limited mobility, or use a wheelchair?

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Yes 4.5% (2) **No 95.5% (42)**

(44 people answered this question, 2 people skipped it)

10. If you use a pushchair or pram, or have limited mobility or use a wheelchair, how do you find our Health Centres?

[Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

Easy to access 66.7% (6) Reasonable to access 22.2% (2)

Hard to access 11.1% (1)

(9 people answered this question, 37 skipped it)

Good access but toilet is a bit tight at Gunnislake to accommodate wheelchair and attendant

Not really enough space in toilet for wheelchair + attendant to be comfortable.

We will look into this to see if we can improve the situation in any way but unfortunately don't have the space to extend the disabled toilet at present.

Not for me but when my mum was alive had no problem with access with her wheelchair

Whilst I do not have mobility problems, my partner does, and is dependent on me to transport him to medical appts when necessary, with the use the surgery wheelchair on arrival. Disabled parking is not always available on site and sometimes a request for a preferred home visit is not always granted with a telephone diagnosis being provided instead.

Our apologies for the restricted parking at Gunnislake which is a result of our very small car park. There is a drop-off point outside the front door which you can use if the disabled bay is already occupied. The GPs assess all requests for home visits and may offer medical advice rather than visiting if they judge this to be appropriate.

One area you could ask about is the website and on-line ordering. You will know about usage and what pages are viewed but you might like to ask people how easy it is to find the information they require. For instance I would have expected opening times to be easier to find - maybe as a banner on the home page

of each surgery. Also perhaps the late opening day could be posted for each week to save having to phone to find out which day this is.

Our website is being completely redesigned at present but we will add opening times to the individual health centre pages on the current site in the meantime.

How does the on-line ordering system work for people - are the drugs always there, for instance.

We keep stocks of all regularly used drugs but also have on-line ordering and 4 deliveries every day at each health centre. Once the hundreds of prescriptions ordered each day have been checked and printed and then signed by GPs, they are dispensed by the dispensers (or left ready for collection if for non-dispensing patients), checked and bagged ready for collection. This is why we ask for 48 hours notice when ordering.

Thank you for reading this.

The partners and staff, Tamar Valley Health