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For the attention of:

Elaine Edwards (Head of Clinical Workforce, Quality & Governance - TELDOC)

Trish Hall (Operational Lead - Shifnal & Priorslee Medical Practice)

Dr Ian Chan

Sarah Davies

8th June 2021

Dear Elaine and Trish

Re: Comments received by Healthwatch Shropshire regarding Shifnal & Priorslee Medical Practice (Shifnal Surgery)

In December 2019, Healthwatch Shropshire conducted an Enter & View visit to Shifnal Medical Practice as part of a broader piece of work to understand access to GP practices including extended access appointment. This visit was one of eight to practices across the county. What was striking at the time was that there was a lot of interest in the visit and report from patients:

- 14 people came into the practice on the day of the visit specifically to speak to us
- 5 people contacted us after the visit to request a copy of the report when it was published

The report highlights the issues patients were experiencing at the time getting through to the practice to request an appointment. We received a response from the practice that is included in the report explaining that:

- 'a detailed piece of work had taken place within the practice prior to the visit to improve telephone access and appointment access during 2019 as a result of patient feedback. At the time of the visit this work was moving towards its final phase patient awareness - communications, promotion, managing expectation so it is not surprising the report makes recommendations in order to improve the patient's experience when booking appointments and we believe they slot in with our practice plan.'

We were also informed that there were plans to engage with the Patient Participation Group to involve them in a series of visits to the practice to:



- ‘speak with individual or small groups of patients in the waiting room and explaining to them the range of appointments on offer and how to book. Patients interested in registering for on line access will be routed to reception on the day with a view to reducing demands on the telephone system.’

This was to be discussed at a meeting with the PPG on 20th April 2020.

For the full report go to: <https://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk/report/2020-02-11/shifnal-and-priorslee-medical-practice-shifnal-surgery-enter-view-visit-report>

We are aware that the Covid-19 pandemic and first lockdown will have impacted these plans.

Healthwatch Shropshire understands that the pressure on GP practices has grown over the last year and that there has been a move to all practices providing telephone triage in order for only patients who need to be seen being given face-to-face appointments. Despite this understanding we are writing to you to share the details of the 45 comments we have received about Shifnal Medical practice between 25th May and 1st June 2021 (attached). This is an unprecedented number of comments about one service in such a short timescale and demonstrates the strength of feeling of these patients.

The role of Healthwatch Shropshire is to ensure the voice of patients and those people using services are heard and so I am now writing under the statutory framework afforded to Healthwatch Shropshire (HWS) under the **Health and Social Care Act 2012** and require a **response within 20 working days** to the following questions. Your response will be published on our website.

Questions:

1. Appointments
 - Did the practice complete the work to improve telephone access and the patient experience of booking appointments as described in the response to our Enter & View report?
 - Patients report high levels of dissatisfaction of the number of times they have to make calls to the practice, and the length of time they spend on the call, to make appointments, access test results, etc. Frequently reporting that they are in the queue for over an hour. Is it correct that currently patients can only arrange appointments or talk to staff by telephone?
 - Do you have plans to increase the number of staff handling calls and if so when would you expect to see improvements in waiting times?
 - Before the pandemic you reported through a survey we asked the practice to complete that you offered 67% of GP appointments through online channels. This appears to have been reduced, is this the case? If so, could you tell us why and when you will be returning to pre-pandemic levels?



- Patients report that you are not offering any initial appointments face-to-face, is this correct?
- They have to wait for between 2 and 4 weeks for a telephone appointment (including to find out test results), how long do patients have to wait on average?
- How are the calls triaged to assess urgency? Several report telling the receptionists they were concerned about 'lumps' (one in the breast) and were only offered telephone appointments weeks ahead.

2. Staff and services

- A significant number of patients report very poor experiences when communicating with some of the reception staff, particular members of staff being rude, off-hand and inappropriately acting as gate keepers. Will you provide reception staff with extra training to address these issues raised by patients?
- A number of patients report a missed diagnosis or mis-management of a condition. How does the practice deal with these type of concerns when they are raised? Can the practice demonstrate that there is a learning culture in relation to concerns of this type?
- Several patients report that you do not provide ear wax removal services and are referring privately, we understood that all practices are contracted to do so, can you confirm the practice position on this?
- Do you provide blood tests at the practice, a patient reports that some people can access them at the practice and some have to go elsewhere?

3. Confidentiality and data protection

- A patient described a breach of patient confidentiality that was reported to you for which no apology was issued. Can you tell us how you would normally deal with a breach of this sort?

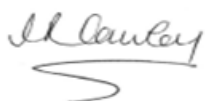
4. Patient involvement

- How do you engage and involve patients in the running of the practice and do you have any plans to develop the relationship with patients?

In June-October 2020 Healthwatch Shropshire asked people to share their views of phone, video and online appointments with us. The report is available on our website at: <https://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk/report/2020-10-20/phone-video-and-on-line-appointments-during-covid-19-pandemic>

I hope you will find the report informative and I particularly draw your attention to the guidance produced by Healthwatch England for patients and professionals about how to get the most out of these types of appointment: <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/advice-and-information/2020-07-28/getting-most-out-virtual-health-and-care-experience>

Yours sincerely



Lynn Cawley - Chief Officer

