

**Report Title****Who are you seeing today?****Organisation****Pikes Lane GP Surgery, Dr Counsell's Practice****Dates:****17 November 2016****Healthwatch Bolton  
Representatives****Gail Gregory and Karen Wilson****Contact details:**

Healthwatch Bolton, 20-22 Bowker's Row, Bolton BL1 2JL

**Acknowledgements**

Healthwatch Bolton would like to thank service users and staff at Dr Counsell's Practice, Pike Lane Surgery for sharing their views and experiences.

**Disclaimer**

This report relates verbatim comments gathered during the time of our visit. All comments recorded by Healthwatch Bolton have been added to Healthwatch Bolton's databank of patient comment.

**Background**

This research is part of a wider project asking patients about;

- who their preferred primary care practitioners are and why.
- what their preferences regarding communication with (and between) the primary care work force are.

The work seeks to inform future decision making about how the primary care workforce could be structured and what technologies could be used to support communications.

**Strategic drivers**

The work is being done in the context of the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Devolution Programme and work in the Localities on the creation of Local Care Organisations.

**Who we spoke to**

We conducted semi structured interviews with eight patients who were waiting for their appointments.

**Topics/Themes**

**GP: Practice nurse: continuity of care: appointments: named GP: female GP: being listened to**

## The Comments

**Who is your first choice of practitioner today? Do you feel that person is the most appropriate clinician? Do you feel there is another professional that could help you better?**

The choice of available practitioners at this surgery is GP or Practice nurse. Half of the patients we spoke to had appointments with the nurse and half with a GP.

*"Practice Nurse"      "Practice Nurse – she's young and very nice"*  
*"Practice Nurse"      "Not my own GP but another one"      "Dr X"*  
*"When I rang today at 10.00 I was told to come as soon as possible and I saw Dr Y."*

All the patients felt they had seen the right person

*"Yes" (I have seen the right clinician)      "Yes"      "Yes, it is the nurse I need to see"*  
*"Yes, I've not seen a doctor - you are poorly when you need to see a doctor"*  
*"Yes I saw the right person. I think that that it's down to the GP to decide who that right person is. I wouldn't want to see anyone and then miss something because they were just interested in their field of expertise."*

**Do you have any preferences about which GP you see?**

Patients expressed preferences for different named GPs, preferring to have continuity or because they like the approach of the GP in question. Only one of the patients seeing the doctor saw their first choice of GP.

*"It would be Dr Z and I would rather see him because he knows my previous illness. It can take up to 4 days to see him."*  
*"We don't know them all here as we've not been patients here for long but continuity is important."*  
*"There was no choice and I would have liked to see Dr W but saw another GP instead."*  
*"Dr A is very approachable. A brilliant doctor and she listens to me."*  
*"I am registered to see Dr Y and chose her because she is a female. I haven't managed to see her yet".*  
*"I haven't always seen the person but now I wait till I can get in with the same on as continuity is important in mv case: I need to see the same person."*

**Are there any circumstances in which you would prefer to see a female GP?**

Most of the female patients said there had been times when they have either chosen to see a female GP or would have liked to have seen a female. One noted that she once had had to make a second appointment as no female GP or other chaperone was available.

*"As I am getting older I seem to want to see a female GP. When I was younger it didn't seem to bother me. If there wasn't a female I would see a male doctor - after all I think they look at me like a mechanic looks at a car. They're very professional."*

*"I've always preferred a male doctor - I've more confidence in a male doctor."*

*"I have asked to see a female GP due to my periods."*

*"I saw a female GP with a cyst under my arm. I would have seen a male GP if there wasn't a female GP around."*

*"I have made sure I saw a female GP in the past for personal issues."*

*"I have requested a female GP in the past. If I've rung and one hasn't available then I would see any GP. It's for the feminine issues and if the option is there to see one I would do. If they are not available then how I view it is that they are paid to do a job. One time I saw a male GP as I had a cough and he wanted to examine my chest. He said he couldn't because he didn't have a chaperone as the nurse wasn't available. I had to make another appointment."*

## **General Comments about the service at this GP Practice**

In general people stated that they are happy with the care they receive, noting that they felt being listened to and having their wishes respected.

*"I'm happy with my care here."*

*"I had a bypass three years ago. I just come here now if I have a chest infection. The care is good and I'm seen straight"*

*"It's probably because of my age and health that getting to see a GP has been easier lately."*

*"The doctor has explained things properly for me this morning."*

*"It's important that whoever you see listens to you - I worry that you might miss things that you need to tell them as you can rush things and forget things. Some practices only offer time to discuss one problem at each appointment. That wouldn't work for me as I have things that are all connected."*

*"Overall I'm happy with my care. I take morphine based medicine for pain and recently saw a doctor to discuss increasing the dose. I can do that myself but wanted the GP to know the pain was worse and I needed more medication. If you see someone different I worry that they will want to send me for tests, scans and physio which I have had previously. I've seen everyone you can see about my problem and as the treatment can't guarantee reducing my pain levels or increasing my mobility then I don't want to take any action at the moment."*

## **Concluding Remarks**

- Patients expressed their appreciation about the care they received from this practice and felt it to be of a good standard.
- Patients valued being able to request appointments with a particular GP which they felt gave them continuity of care and maintained their dignity.
- Patients felt that they had seen the right clinician on the morning of our visit and again expressed their desire for continuity of care.

## **Response from the Practice**

Each morning the surgery has a minimum three GP's available. If the problem was acute then it is likely that a patient could see a different doctor. It depends on time of call as to who is available as some GP's are more popular. The effect of "patient choice" is that sometimes patients will have to wait longer for a routine appointment.

Continuity of care is important to the practice and non-urgent appointments may have to wait as in this case. At the time of this survey, the practice were employing three locum doctors until permanent doctors could be appointed.

One of the Dr's mentioned has retired and another does not work everyday, these realities obviously reflect on the practicalities of patients seeing their preferred or named GP every time.