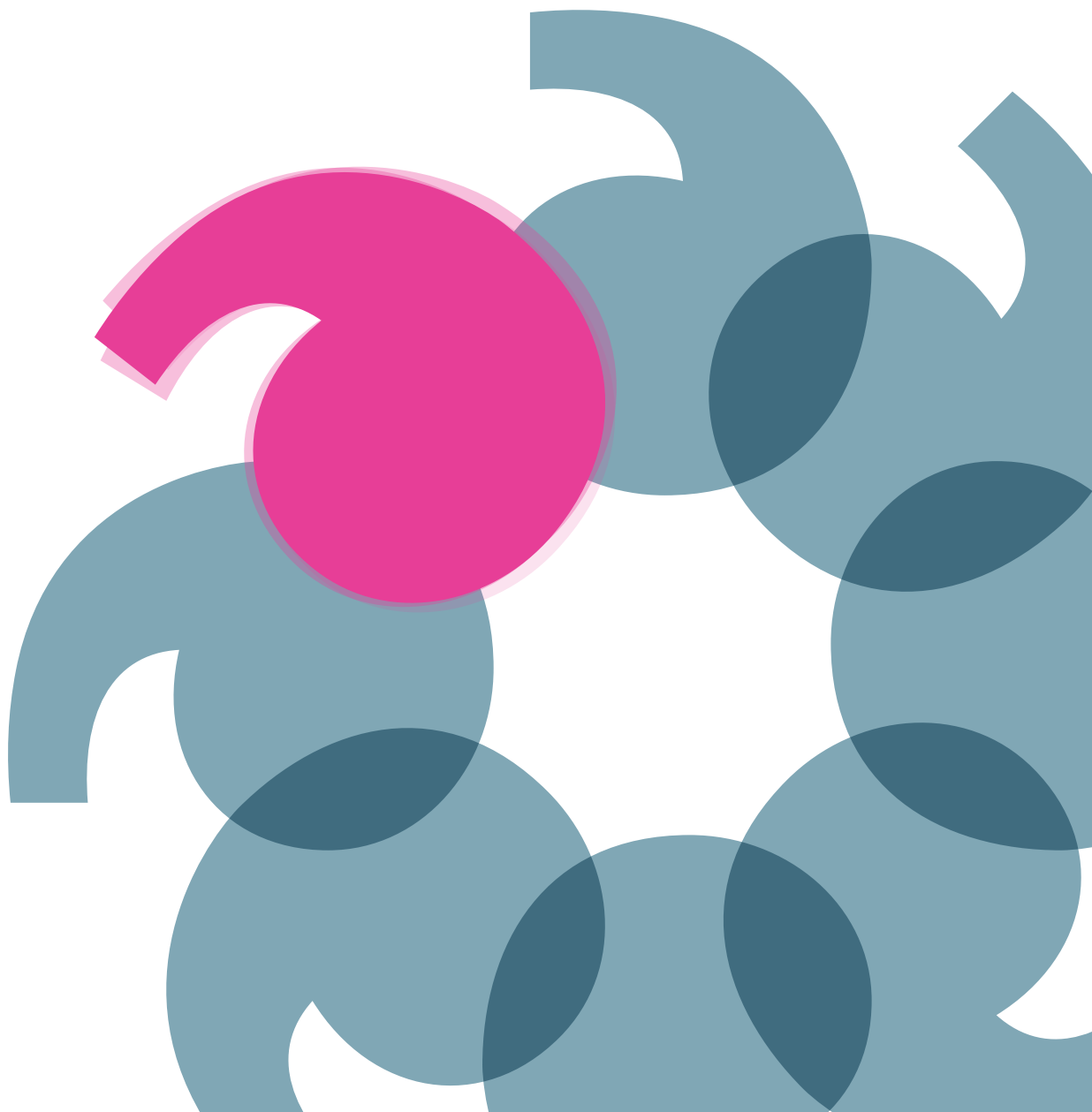


Whittington Hospital Enter and View visits to Imaging, and the Fracture and Antenatal Clinics



Healthwatch Islington

Healthwatch Islington is an independent organisation led by volunteers from the local community. It is part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations that involve people of all ages and all sections of the community.

Healthwatch Islington gathers local people's views on the health and social care services that they use. We make sure those views are taken into account when decisions are taken on how services will look in the future, and how they can be improved.

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Introduction

Enter & View is the statutory power granted to every local Healthwatch which allows authorised representatives to visit publicly funded health and social care services to observe how services are being delivered, and to gather feedback from service users, from their relatives and carers, and from staff. Enter and View visits can either be announced, meaning the service knows about them in advance and is prepared for the visit, or unannounced.

In November 2018 Healthwatch Islington conducted two announced Enter and View visits to the Whittington Hospital over the course of one week. During these visits authorised representatives spoke to 64 patients. Representatives also recorded their own observations on finding their way around the hospital. We had hoped to speak to staff to gather their views, but felt that clinic staff were too busy during both visits.

These visits fed into a larger piece of work around patients' experiences of how services communicate with them, building on Healthwatch Islington's previous work on the Accessible Information Standard.

In planning these visits we worked with the Patient Experience team at the Whittington. We were interested in hearing patients' views about the way the hospital communicates with them, and their experience of finding their way around the hospital.

Who we spoke to

Of the 64 patients we spoke to, 24 were Islington residents. Two patients were continuing their treatment at the hospital after originally being treated in A&E following an accident nearby. We visited three clinics over the two visits and spoke to patients as follows:

Number of patients we spoke to at each clinic

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Fracture Clinic | 25 |
| Imaging | 29 |

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Antenatal Clinic | 10 |
| Total | 64 |

Sex of respondents

| Female | Male | No answer | Total |
|--------|------|-----------|-------|
| 42 | 16 | 6 | 64 |

Ages of respondents

| Under 16 | 16-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 65-79 | 80+ | No answer | Total |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|
| 0 | 2 | 27 | 22 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 64 |

Ethnicity

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Asian/ Asian British | 5 |
| Black/ Black British | 7 |
| Greek/ Greek Cypriot | 2 |
| Mixed | 3 |

| | |
|---------------|----|
| White British | 23 |
| White Irish | 3 |
| Other | 15 |
| No answer | 6 |
| Total | 64 |

Did patient identify as disabled?

| Yes | No | No answer | Total |
|-----|----|-----------|-------|
| 10 | 36 | 18 | 64 |

What patients told us

We asked patients whether they had previously visited the clinic, to add some context for their subsequent answers. We understood that patients who had visited the clinic before would be more familiar with how to locate it. Around two thirds of patients we spoke to had previously visited the clinic.

Appointment letters

Most patients we spoke to had received an appointment letter before their appointment. However, in the Imaging Department some patients arrived with a referral letter from their GP for a drop in appointment. At the Fracture Clinic, some patients had booked their appointment on their previous visit so had not received a letter.

Of those who had received a letter, most felt that the information included was clear and easy to read.

'It was clear where to go'
[Fracture Clinic patient]

'The letter was clear. It told me what I needed to do before my appointment, for example bring prescriptions and write down any questions I have in a list. It was also clear where I needed to go.'
[Fracture Clinic patient]

One patient said the reason that appointment letter was easy to understand was because there was not too much information and the important parts were in bold.

However, some patients had issues with their letters: one received two letters, because the first one did not include the time of the appointment, so they had to call to ask for another letter. Another patient received a letter with no appointment date on it. One patient told us that their letter contained no information about what today's appointment would be about, which they found unhelpful. One patient in the Fracture Clinic said, *'Letters come late or not at all'*.

One patient spoke positively about the flexibility of the service. She was sent a letter, but the appointment was scheduled for when she was out of the country. She called up to cancel and the Fracture Clinic was able to rearrange the appointment to ensure she was seen before she went away.

Text reminders

Did you receive a reminder text, email or phone call?

| Yes | No | Not applicable | Don't know | No answer | Total |
|-----|----|----------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| 34 | 19 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 64 |

34 of the patients we spoke to received a reminder about their appointment. 33 of these patients received that reminder by text message. One patient told us they received an email reminder as well, and one patient told us they got a phone call. 19 patients who had a scheduled appointment did not receive a reminder. Nine patients would naturally not be sent a reminder, because they were attending the hospital on a drop in basis with a referral letter from their GP (or in one case the patient was a prison inmate and appointment arrangements were handled differently).

Those who received reminder texts found them to be very helpful. Patients commented that they contained helpful information, and reminded them about their appointments. One patient explained that she had forgotten her appointment letter today, but the text contained all the information she needed to attend.

Those who had not received a reminder text reported that they would have found this helpful and some explained that they receive them for some appointments, such as scans, but not for others (appointments with the midwife was given as an example) and they did not know why. Others told us that they had received multiple reminders for the same appointment. One patient had received four text reminders for their latest appointment.

It was not clear why there was inconsistency around the receiving of text reminders for scheduled appointments at the clinics.

Finding the clinic

Patients told us that in general they find it relatively easy to find the clinic they need. The floor and name of the clinic is included in the appointment letter. From the main entrance a number of patients asked for directions at reception, with a few others asking volunteers along the way. Patients found volunteers helpful, but some felt they were not in enough locations.

'They need more volunteers, this is a big hospital.'

[Imaging Clinic patient]

On the whole patients found the Imaging Clinic easy to find, and many found the Fracture Clinic reasonably easy to find. Patients found the Antenatal clinic the most difficult to locate, due to its location in the Kenwood Wing and there not being enough signage.

'It's generally difficult to find. Previously I've asked people. The signage isn't great.'

[Antenatal Clinic patient]

'The first time it was confusing, there's no reception from the Dartmouth Park Hill entrance, so there's no one to ask.'

[Antenatal Clinic patient]

'There were no directions for the lifts. After that it is ok, but another sign by the lift would be good.'

[Antenatal Clinic patient]

'I took a guess. There was no sign for this specific clinic (Fetal Medicine Unit).'

[Antenatal Clinic patient]

In general, patients visiting the Fracture Clinic found it easy to find, but some did say that the experience of finding their way around the hospital could be improved.

'I found it quite easy, but the diagram of the hospital and clinics on the wall is very small and pinned up with a drawing pin. It would be too small for anyone with poor vision to see.'

[Fracture Clinic patient]

'Not brilliant, I came from the rear entrance, because that's where we could park, and there's no one there to ask.'

[Fracture Clinic patient]

'No clear signage to the Fracture Clinic initially. It's called Clinic 1B on the signs.'

[Fracture Clinic patient]

Patients attending the Imaging Department found it very easy to find. Some patients asked at the main reception, and others pointed out that the letter and reminder texts told you that the clinic was on level 3, and once you've got the lift to level 3 you arrive directly into the Imaging waiting area.

There seems to be a gap in clear signage for those using the rear entrances to access the hospital. This could have a negative impact on those with access needs, as those are the entrances that lead from the hospital car parking facilities.

Arriving at the Clinic

Patients generally felt confident that they had arrived in the correct clinic. This seemed most obvious in Imaging, as patients commented on the large sign identifying the Imaging reception area. At other clinics, patients explained that they had needed to ask at reception for clarification.

'Sometimes you'd like to see bigger signs, but with my glasses it's fine.'

[Fracture Clinic patient]

'I saw other people with fractures and assumed I was in the right place.'

[Fracture Clinic patient]

Clinic Waiting Areas

We asked patients a few questions around the comfort of the waiting room, especially as visits to some clinics involve long waiting times.

Patients in each of the clinics we visited found it easy to find a seat (if they needed one) upon their arrival. Most of those we spoke to knew where to get a drink of water if they needed one. Each waiting area we visited contained a water cooler. However, there was no clear signage for these and some patients talked to us about the café on the 1st floor as they were not aware of the water coolers.

Each waiting area had toilet facilities either nearby or inside the waiting area itself. Fewer patients knew where the toilets were than knew where to get a drink of water. However, over half of those we spoke to knew where the toilets were located. Patients who didn't know had either never needed that information or weren't aware due to a lack of clear signage from where they happened to be sitting in the waiting area.

Clinic information

We asked patients whether they had been given all the relevant information they needed when they checked in for their appointments. Most patients explained that they were told to have a seat and wait. There was no clear information in any of the clinics we visited that explained what to expect during the visit.

At Imaging, patients were also given a pager (or buzzer) and reception staff explained where they needed to go when it buzzed and what they needed to do with the pager.

At the Antenatal Clinic and the Fracture Clinic, patients were not explicitly told about waiting times when they checked in. However at the Fracture Clinic a nurse was going round the waiting room and explaining that the clinic was running late and by how long. Patients felt this was helpful.

Improvements to communication

We asked patients whether anything could be improved in terms of how the hospital communicates with them. In general patients commented that it was good, and fine as it was. A couple of patients said they would like reminder texts (or emails) before their appointments. A few other patients said that more and clearer signage would be helpful.

One patient suggested that appointment booking could be done online which they felt would make the process clearer and easier. One patient spoke about having booked their appointment online:

'Before I got my appointment I was told to book an appointment online for the spinal service. It wasn't clear to me what that was for, or who it was with, until the appointment letter arrived. This could have been made clearer.'

[Fracture Clinic patient]

Additional comments

Patients also praised the staff, especially in the maternity and fracture departments. Patients felt that staff were friendly, helpful and approachable. Patients also spoke about the length of waits, but they didn't seem to mind as they knew the NHS was stretched, and were confident that when they did see the clinician it would be a positive experience.

'They're running an hour late... but that's because they don't rush you, they listen to patients.'

[Fracture Clinic patient]

Recommendations

We recommend that Whittington Hospital take the following actions:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | More and clearer signage be provided, especially for patients using the rear entrances to the hospital where there are no reception facilities. |
| 2 | Ensure that all patients who want to receive appointment reminders by text or email are sent them, and ensure that this is consistent across different departments. |
| 3 | Ensure that signage for the toilets from the waiting areas is visible and clear. |



Patients found the appointment letters to be clear and to contain appropriate levels of information.

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