

## **Healthwatch Report Statement – Ashton Medical Group**

Ashton Medical Group would like to thank Healthwatch and the patients who participated and gave vital feedback about our service.

Following a prolonged merger of three surgeries in April 2018, the practice has undergone significant change as well as a huge increase in demand and turnover of staff, the practice was also operating without a Practice Manager for an extended period of time.

Unfortunately, given the size of the merger, this has resulted in a prolonged period where the practice is still restructuring to try and cope with the increased demand as the result of the merger. Several local case studies have shown that following practice mergers, there is usually a period of instability and change for up to and over 2 years after the merger.

Along with the recruitment of new members of staff, we are currently redesigning our whole patient journey, telephone system, staff training and appointment book. One thing we have been mindful of as a practice is not to continuously change systems and booking methods as this can lead to confusion and patient dissatisfaction. Unfortunately this system redesign is taking longer than planned as we need to ensure that each decision we take is reviewed internally and discussed with our patient groups to understand suitability.

We note that this report was conducted over a number of months at a particularly tough time for the practice and therefore expected to see some negative feedback and patient experience. Following this report and other patient feedback, we have recruited a new Practice Manager as well as several new members of admin and reception to try and improve call waiting times. We are also in the process of changing our phone and website provider and redesigning our appointment system to introduce a more fair and equitable service and give patients more tools to access self-care and online services as well as reducing call waiting times.

Also, to improve our appointment system we ensure that we are offering more appointments than the national average as reported by the RCGP and the BMA. Some of these appointments are with types of clinicians that are relatively new in general practice, such as ANP, Pharmacist, and Paramedic and hopefully in a few months, a First Contact Physiotherapist. We will be updating our website with information about these clinicians to help patients understand why they may be offered an appointment with them, rather than a GP. The benefit of seeing these clinicians is often that they can see a lot of the same problems as GPs and often, can mean that you can be seen quicker and free up GP appointments for patients with more complex conditions.

We would like to thank our patients for their continued patience and feedback and would encourage patients to continue to offer feedback and suggestions. We hope that patients will start to see the benefits of changes made in the practice soon. We would also ask that patients consider joining our patient participation group or volunteer for our Patient Champions to allow us to improve further, to get involved please email [tgccg.amg@nhs.net](mailto:tgccg.amg@nhs.net)