



An Apple A Day

Newsletter for patients registered at GP Surgeries in
Hitchin and Whitwell

HWPCN

**Hitchin & Whitwell
Primary Care Network**

Welcome to the fourth newsletter from
HWPCN!

The focus of this newsletter is to provide an update on the
Enhanced Access survey and public consultation which we
held in November.

NEW OUT OF HOURS SERVICE COMING TO HITCHIN

Good news! From April 2023, patients registered at GP Practices in Hitchin and Whitwell will have access to a new 'out of hours' appointments service in Hitchin for the first time. Currently provided at the Sollershott Surgery in Letchworth, the new service will be based at a Hitchin hub and open from 6.30-8.30pm each weekday evening and all day on Saturdays.

We invited patients to be involved in developing this, via an online survey and public meetings held at Hitchin Town Hall.

The patient survey invited views on optimum times for appointments, the preferred mix / type of appointments, and how patients would like to book them. Lengthy efforts were gone to, to ensure wide distribution through the practices and in the town. The new survey was accessible via a web page and QR code, and a summary of responses can be found later in this newsletter.

As an online survey would not reach everyone, we explored other ways to engage people at risk of health inequalities such as those without mobile phone/internet access or with a language barrier. We used a meeting of our Patients' Participation Group to source ideas.

Information and posters were sent to diverse groups in the community, from the Rotary Club to Feed Up Warm Up, faith settings, toddler groups, Hitchin Youth Trust, Hitchin Museum, and a dozen school newsletters to reach local families.

Posters were displayed in pharmacies, shops and supermarkets around the town and an article was submitted to the Comet.

Two meetings were held at Hitchin Town Hall on 17th November, selected because of its accessibility and central location close to public transport. We chose 2pm and 6pm to cater for those who would not want to be out after dark and also those likely to use an 'out of hours' service. The events were an opportunity for the public to hear about the proposals and were so popular that we had to run four sessions rather than two. (We apologise to those who were unable to get in or get a seat.) Dr Belcher hosted the events and fielded a range of questions and feedback, of which a sample is overleaf.

The patient input received will be built into our planning and delivery of the new service and we would like to thank everyone for taking part.



With best wishes for a healthy Christmas and New Year.



Summary of Survey Findings

What patients want from new Enhanced Access:

Evenings 80%, Saturdays 77%

Most popular appt types (could choose more than one option):

Evenings: same day GP 86%, pre-bookable GP 82%, minor illness clinics 63%, health checks and screening 45%, immunisations 32%

Saturdays: same day GP 79%, pre-bookable GP 77%, minor illness clinics 65%, health checks and screening 47%, immunisations 34%

Overwhelming preference for face to face appts (although could choose more than one option): 94%

Online booking preferred by over 70% although booking via surgery (as currently) also popular at 64%

Sample of Town Hall Event Feedback

- How are these different services accessed? – booked through your surgery, all have equal access to appointments.
- If bookable via GP surgery, it's the same lengthy wait time on the phone – could the system not offer one option for EAS?
- Information on EAS staff/services available should be on practice websites.
- It would be good if travel vaccinations could be offered out of hours.
- Would EAS staff have access to records to see hospital discharge letters for example? - yes
- Couldn't each surgery just extend their own opening hours? - Too costly to do individually, funding comes through PCN and sharing staff resource across PCN makes it possible
- Online booking creates issues around inclusion - phone booking is available.

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