



Healthwatch Darlington's  
GP Practice –  
Patient Registration & ID Report  
2016



## Introduction

Healthwatch Darlington Ltd (HWD) is a strong independent community champion giving local people a voice that improves and enhances health and social care provision on behalf of the people of Darlington. HWD believe that no matter who you are, where you live or what age you are, you do have a voice and you have the right for that voice to be listened to.

**Our Strategic Duties include:**

### Information Gathering

- Gathering views, experiences and needs of local people about their health and social care, focusing on those who are under-represented in decision making or face barriers to influencing the system.
- Gathering and monitoring other key information that tells us how the local health and social care system is working for people.

### Influencing

- Influencing services and their commissioners to consider and act upon the views, experiences and needs we present.
- Championing the involvement of Darlington residents in the development and evaluation of services.

### Informing

- Enabling people to get the most out of the current system by providing information about service provision, the rights people have in relation to their care, and opportunities they have to influence what care looks like.

## GP Practice - Patient Registration & ID

As part of our information and signposting duties Healthwatch Darlington regularly receive enquiries from individuals about their GP practice. Individuals approach HWD when they are faced with barriers that could be enabling them to access Primary Healthcare services.

We try provide the most appropriate information quickly and efficiently to try an alleviate individuals concerns and to answer their questions. It soon became apparent to HWD that a number of enquiries were related to patient registration & ID. We regularly identify trending issues that may be occurring with a service by gathering feedback from members of the public. This information is the entered and recorded into our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM).

## Findings

During the 2016 we gathered 7 responses regarding GP Practice Patient Registration & ID in the Darlington area.

### Public Feedback: -

- A lady telephoned HWD to enquire about registering at Blacketts Surgery. The lady does not want to stay at her Parkgate surgery anymore due to alleged problems with the receptionist staff. The lady has approached Blacketts and they have told her she should try and register at a practice nearer to her home address. The lady does not want to register at Moorlands or Carmel due to bad things she has heard. She feels Blacketts is the best option due to passing it on her commute to work. HWD advised the lady to try register at Moorlands as it is nearer to her home. The lady did not want to do this and has told HWD that she is going to try Blacketts again. - *Received August 2016*

- A lady emailed HWD to make an enquiry about registering at a GP surgery in Darlington.

"I am currently a patient registered with Clifton Court Medical Practice and I have decided that I am unhappy with this surgery and would like to register with Orchard Court Surgery.

I rang Orchard Court Surgery to enquire about registering and I was told I could not register as I do not live in their catchment area. Is this correct as I was under the impression that if you are a resident of Darlington that you can register with any GP surgery in the Darlington area.

Please could someone let me know?" - *Received July 2016*

- Resident called to advise she had been removed from her GP practice patient list and was worried about not receiving medication for her ongoing care needs.

The GP practice had stated she needed to find a GP out of area, as she was living away from Darlington 8-10 months per year. Resident confirms this is not the case. She has a caravan and visits it often but by no means is it for 8-10 months of the year and she resides permanently in Darlington. She was in the caravan at the time and her relatives had picked up a prescription from the GP practice for her as she was worried about running out, as she hadn't received any tablets since the beginning of the previous month. Patient had spoken to the Practice Manager (PM) and was very upset - Resident felt talked down to and alleged the PM had 'no manners'

Resident had 4 tablets left of one of her medications and felt very anxious about running out. HWD advised to contact 111 who would give advice on how to ensure she was not left without medication and arrange an emergency appointment if needed.

Resident was verbally very upset and in tears on the telephone.

Resident advised she had always attended GP appointments at home in Darlington, but if for some reason she needed care when she was on a mini break she would use the 'Walk In Centre' there.

Resident was signposted to NHS Customer Contact Centre for further assistance—*Received July 2016*

- A lady telephoned HWD on behalf of a client. The client was struggling to register her and her children at a GP surgery in Darlington. The lady does not have adequate identification to register. The surgery has requested she has photographic ID. The lady does not have the identification and is unable to afford to pay for new ID at this present moment. - *Received July 2016*
- A lady telephoned HWD to make a complaint about Carmel Surgery. The lady approached Carmel Surgery for make an appointment as she had a chest infection. The lady was shocked to be told she is no longer registered at the surgery and has not been since Sept 2014 as she had moved. The lady insisted she has not been told this and as not aware. The surgery told the lady she was sent a letter but the lady allegedly never received this. The lady had to go to Dr Piper House and discovered she has pneumonia. The lady believes this could have been avoided if she knew as there would not have been a delay in treatment and she is upset. The lady would like to make complaint about how this was dealt with. HWD informed the lady that she will now need to register at another practice as she doesn't live in the catchment area for Carmel any longer. - *Received April 2016*
- A lady telephoned HWD to ask why she was not allowed to change her GP surgery. The lady has experienced problems with her current surgery and wishes to change. The lady has approached other surgeries within Darlington but has been told that she is not allowed to join them as she does not live in the catchments area. The lady wishes to have better access to primary care services as she works fulltime and by the time she gets home her GP surgery is closed. The lady has already made a complaint to her practice manager about the problems she is facing but she feels this has made things worse. HWD told the lady she could make a complaint to NHS customer contact centre or to ICA. The lady does not want to do this at this time. - *Received March 2016*

- A lady telephoned HWD to express concerns that her GP has told her she needs to change surgery as she no longer lives within the catchment area. The lady has always gone to the same doctors her whole life and so has her daughter who has Asperger Syndrome. When she confronted the surgery and asked them why the decision was made after all of these years with no problems, they allegedly told her it because she doesn't live within catchment area. The lady can't send her daughter to Moorlands surgery as her ex-partner attends this one and the daughter knows this and would become very stressed. The practice manager was allegedly rude and abrupt with the lady and she feels they have not listened to her. The surgery has said they will deal with the daughter's medication until a new surgery is found. - *Received February 2016*

## Healthwatch Key Findings

Upon evaluation of enquires we received, the following key areas were identified:



## Providers Feedback:

Healthwatch Darlington decided to engage with the 11 GP practices in Darlington about patient registration, focusing on practice boundary rules and ID.

This is what we asked GP practices:

- 1) Are you registering new NHS patients at your practice at the moment?
- 2) What is your procedure in regards to the home address of a new patient and the location of your surgery?
- 3) If someone approached the surgery and was already registered elsewhere but wished to move practices, what is your practice ruling on the move?
- 4) What form of identification do people need when registering as a new patient?
- 5) If an existing patient moves house and the new address is further away from your practice, are they allowed to remain on your list?

HWD created a report which contained the GP practices responses this enabled us to see a wide collective view of how the GP practices are currently working.

GP Practice	Are you registering new NHS patients at your practice at the moment?	What is your procedure in regards to the home address of a new patient and the location of your surgery?	If someone approached the surgery and was already registered elsewhere but wished to move practices, what is your practice ruling on the move?	What form of identification do people need when registering as a new patient?	If an existing patient moves house and the new address is further away from your practice, are they allowed to remain on your list?
Blacketts Medical Practice	Yes we are registering new NHS patients at our practice at the moment.	All surgeries have a Practice area which we make clear to patients.	We would allow them to register with us.	Photo id, plus a utility bill (not a phone bill) or bank statement.	It depends where they are moving to.
Carmel Medical Practice	Yes	We inform all new patients of the nearest surgery to their address as many patients are not aware there may be one closer to them. If they still want to register with us then that is their choice but many do prefer to go their nearest, especially if they are elderly or have young children.	Normally, if we are the nearest surgery then we would take them although at the moment, due to the list just reopening, we are encouraging patients to stay where they are for now whilst we register those close to us with no doctor.	They need 2 IDs, a photo ID and a separate ID with their address on.	If they are out of our boundary area then no. All the practices are struggling at the moment due to the amount of new builds and lack of recruiting new GPs. We ourselves may have to look at our boundary as it is very large and as there are 11 other practices in the town we should no longer need to cover the whole of the town. Other surgeries have their immediate area only.
Clifton Court Medical Practice	Yes we are	We will register patients within our practice boundary which pretty much covers the majority of Darlington.	It is the patient's choice and we have no problem accepting patients from other surgeries in Darlington.	We need photo identification and also proof of address	If in Darlington then yes they are, however if outside of Darlington they would be expected to register at their nearest practice due to our GPs not being able to provide home visits etc.

Denmark Street Surgery	Yes we are	We register patients within the Darlington Area	As long as they are in the Darlington area this is not a problem	Ideally 2 forms of ID one being photographic but we will be flexible. If patients really struggle to obtain any ID this is not a problem, they can also register and bring ID at a later date.	As long as they are in the Darlington area.
Felix House Surgery	YES	MUST BE IN OUR PRACTICE AREA AS DEFINED ON OUR WEBSITE/PRACTICE LEAFLET	HAPPY TO ACCEPT PROVIDING EVIDENCE OF RESIDENCE IN OUR AREA IS PROVIDED	PHOTO ID AND PROOF OF ADDRESS BUT IF PATIENTS HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH THIS WE LOOK AT INDIVIDUAL CASES (e.g. No Passport etc.)	WE ASK PATIENTS WHO MOVE OUT OF OUR AREA TO REGISTER WITH A NEW PRACTICE. DARLINGTON IS NOT IN OUR PRACTICE AREA.
Moorlands Surgery	Yes we are registering new NHS patients at our practice	At the moment we do register patients from out of area but warn them that we will not do home visits (I am going to review this policy though as I feel it may be better if we keep to those patient's living within our practice boundary).	If someone wanted to move to us from another local surgery we would register them.	We ask for proof of ID, photo and address (but we would not refuse to register if the patient has difficulty in supplying it - we would review on a case by case basis)	We have allowed patients to remain if they move just outside the boundary - this is at the GP's discretion.
Neasham road Surgery	We are registering new patients but you should be aware that due to GP shortages and recruitment problems, we have requested to close our list and a decision is awaited on 11 <sup>th</sup> August. If granted this will be for a period of 9 months.	No, if they lived outside of our catchment area we would not register them. Catchment areas are agreed with NHS England and are written into our contracts.	For existing patients who are registered with us but move to elsewhere we keep them. We do not ask them to register nearer their home. If a practice asked to register with us as they had moved nearer us, we would accept them.	We do ask for ID. This is to avoid prescription fraud and even NHS number fraud. It does not stop a patient from registering, we would then ask for information about their previous GP and obtain information from them. I don't recall any issues here in asking for this. We ask for photo ID and proof of address.	N/A

<b>Orchard Court Surgery</b>	Yes we are taking on new patients if they live within our practice boundary	We have a practice boundary that we stick to due to the high demand of patient requests to register here	We would take them on if they live within our practice boundary	We ask for photo ID and proof of address	We would never ask a patient to leave if they moved out of our boundary ONLY if they moved out of Darlington they would be asked to move
<b>Parkgate Surgery</b>	Yes	We cover DL1, DL3 and Parts of DL2 or can be registered as 'out of area' patient.	Patient choice to register with us. They would need to complete a couple of forms and then admin team will process immediately on receipt of the forms.	This is not compulsory and we are flexible depending on circumstance and we will accept other forms.	Yes but they will need to be registered as an 'out of area' patient, no home visits from us.
<b>Rockliffe Court Surgery</b>	We are taking on new patients within our practice boundary which is shown on our website	We have an inner and outer boundary and new patients must be within the inner but patients that are already with us may stay if within the outer boundary or otherwise need to register at a surgery close to them.	N/A	We require proof of address when a new patient registers	N/A
<b>Whinfield Surgery</b>	Yes	The address of the patient is to be within our large catchment area	Same as point 2	We request photo ID and address ID but we would never say no to a new patient if these documents were not available	Yes as long as in Darlington or the surrounding area

## What We Did Next

Following on from all of the information we gathered from patients and providers we decided to approach Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group and Primary Healthcare Darlington for a response.

From this Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group suggested that we had a meeting with Paul Irving a Primary Care Commissioner to discuss the technicalities of practice registrations and boundaries.

Paul was invited to one of our team meetings where we were able to ask any questions we needed answering following on from the concerns we had received from patients, coupled with the conflicting information received from practices.

We learnt that GP practices are able to have their own procedures and processes in place when it comes to practice boundary areas. Each individual practice operates as essentially a private organisation. Boundary areas form part of the practice contracts.

It was suggested that HWD looked into the 'Out of Areas' scheme which could help alleviate some issues for certain patients that require access to a GP practice outside of their practice boundary area.

HWD challenged the current guidance available from the NHS regarding patient ID. It appears very recently new guidance was released which HWD need to obtain. The new guidance has been updated following on from the release of 'Patient Online' this year. Paul suggested that this is to safeguard and to protect patient's online records and to ensure that each new patient registration is formally identified as the correct person they claim to be. In certain situations it may be useful for a new patient without the required photographic ID to communicate with practice managers. An agreement could be made between the patient and practice manager that there would be no access to online patient records for a time period whilst the patient has time to pay for photo ID.

## Next Steps

Healthwatch Darlington have been gathering new information to ensure that we can provide the most up to date information to individuals who have concerns about patient registration and ID in the future.

- We have approached each individual GP practice to request a copy of their latest **'Patient Handbook'**. This is to ensure that we have all the relevant information we need for each practice. This information will be kept for future use and will be used by our Information & Signposting Officer when out in the community engaging with individuals.
- We have been exploring ways for patients to obtain photographic ID at a lower cost. This will help patients who have recently moved to the area and are from a low income family. We have been engaging with Citizens ID who will be providing us with a promotional poster to explain to individuals how they can obtain photographic ID From as little as £5.00.
- We have obtained information about the 'Out of Areas' scheme which we plan to use in the future if this appropriate for a patient.
- We have received the up to date guidance on photographic ID which will be referred to in the future.

We will continue to work collaboratively with the GP practice in Darlington so that each and every individual patient is given the correct information at a time when they may be stressed about how to access primary healthcare services. We will continue to monitor the situation and to promote new information to patients across Darlington.

# Contact us

**Address:**

Healthwatch Darlington

CVS Building

Church Row

Darlington

DL1 5QD

**Phone number:**

01325 380145 (Landline)

07525 237723 (Text)

08088010383 (Information and Signposting)

**Email:** [info@healthwatchdarlington.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchdarlington.co.uk)

**Website URL:** [www.healthwatchdarlington.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchdarlington.co.uk)

