

Five Towns Surgery

Date of Monitoring visit

3rd March 2020. 1:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Address of Surgery

Five Towns Surgery
Shelton Primary Care Centre
Norfolk Street
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire, ST1 4PB

Authorised Representatives

Dave Rushton - Healthwatch Stoke staff

Unfortunately, the other representative due to undertake this visit was ill, so Mr. Rushton decided to undertake the visit by himself

Representatives have undertaken Enter and View Training and are enhanced DBS checked.

Purpose of visit

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent were informed verbally by patients that they had had difficulty in making appointments, often due to the unavailability of appropriate staff. Additionally, we had heard there had been difficulties between senior Practice staff and the Practice owner, Dr. Chandra.

Our visit was designed to find out more about the situation and to offer, if required, our support.

Methodology

A letter was sent to the Practice Manager, Mrs Diane Adams, on 20th January 2020 letting the surgery know we were planning to visit at 'some point within the next three months'. Whilst checking details for the surgery, it was announced on their web site that: *With effect from 1st October 2019, Five Towns Surgery will be under the new management of Five Towns GP Services Ltd, a registered limited company with three clinical directors who are all General Practitioners (GP's)*

Overview of the surgery.

The surgery is located on the first floor of the Shelton Primary Care Building and is one of three GP Practices sharing the building and its' facilities. The waiting room

is very open, extremely tidy and pleasant with plenty of seating for patients for all three Practices. A long, shared reception desk is used by medical receptionists, again, for the three practices. Behind this area can be seen a large open plan office area used by GP staff. The atmosphere is business like and the patient area is comfortable and clean. A range of toys is provided in a corner to entertain young children who are waiting. Much useful information is displayed and the Family and Friends information was observed. The practice would be happy to display Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent dignity & respect notices and make available Healthwatch enquiry cards.

At the time we went 1.45pm there were patients in reception, but we were unable to engage with them as shortly after announcing our arrival, we were met by Mr. Alan Buckley, the Business Manager of Norfolk Street Surgery.

Meeting with Alan Buckley

This part of the visit had not been planned but Mr. Buckley expressed his gratitude to be allowed to explain the current situation and how it had come about. He said that, on the 1st October 2019 a 'new organisation' had been brought into existence which took over Five Towns Surgery. It is known as "5 Towns GP Services Ltd".

This was part of a contract which had been drawn up and approved by the CCG and remains in operation until April 2021. It removes Dr Chandra from any position within Five Towns Surgery and he confirmed that there had been many complaints to the CCG by patients and by Practice staff.

The 'new' Five Towns Surgery originally consisted of two GP locums, all the previously employed reception and clinical staff and a nurse who had been brought in to complement the staff numbers. As of the time of our visit, the surgery now had two salaried GPs and additionally, Mr. Buckley informed our visitor, GPs from Norfolk Street surgery on a weekly basis take eight patient sessions for Five Towns to avoid longer waiting times. There is also an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, a Practice Nurse and a Healthcare Assistant.

He assured us that since this new organisation took over the running of Five Towns surgery, the number of complaints had dropped very significantly and, in fact, the surgery had started receiving compliments. There had been patient complaints made daily up until the end of 2019, but in 2020 (up until the day of our visit) there were none.

He also said that some administrative processes had been moved from Five Towns to Norfolk Street surgery for clinical safety reasons.

Finally, Mr. Buckley asked if Healthwatch Stoke would be able to undertake a 'patient experience survey' of our own design to assess the perception of the surgery from the patient perspective and we agreed, but said we would also wish to carry out the survey with patients of Norfolk Street surgery, to see what their perception of the new arrangements are. It was suggested that we look at arranging this with our volunteers later in April 2020.

Meeting with Diane Adams, Five Towns Surgery Practice Manager

The meeting with Diane was brief, after the session with Alan. However, Diane confirmed that following her long period of absence following many problems with the previous owner of the Practice, she was now back fulltime, with exactly the same staff as before, which had been reassuring to patients.

She confirmed that the addition of the Practice Nurse, plus a Physician Associate, had further improved the relationship with patients.

When we explained about the request from Alan to undertake the survey, she welcomed the opportunity to gain an independent view of the perception of the surgery since the changes took place.

Conclusions and recommendations

Our visiting team found very little of concern during this visit and were impressed by the way in which the Practice was now run.

Furthermore, we were reassured by the answers given both by the Practice Manager and the Business Manager regarding the complaints and negative comments that had been made.

We wish to take up the chance to undertake a patient survey of both Five Towns Surgery and the Norfolk Street practice later in April 2020, to be undertaken by our volunteers so that we may gain and report on the current patient perception of the surgeries.