

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# The impact of Reduced Hours at New Larchwood Surgery



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## Introduction

"My mother is now totally dependent on us - she can't walk far - she can't use the bus. The changes are not at all helpful for the elderly."

(Patient's daughter, patient has major long-term condition)<sup>1</sup>

This report presents findings from **385 patients** who responded to a survey conducted by Healthwatch Brighton and Hove to **evaluate the impact of new opening hours at New Larchwood surgery**, Coldean. The purpose of the survey was to examine patients' opinion of these changes.

Five years ago (2016/2017) New Larchwood Surgery was taken over by the partners of Carden Surgery and continued to provide the same service. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, New Larchwood Surgery reduced the opening hours from 7 sessions (a mix of mornings and afternoons) to 2 mornings a week. Patients contacting the surgery were offered appointments at an alternative surgery, Carden Surgery.

Patients complained that a) they were informed late - in some cases after the change had already occurred; b) Carden surgery was much further away (2 bus rides and a minimum of 25 minutes travel time) and c) general complaints about the reduced access to a local surgery. The Brighton & Hove NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) provided a response to the report which is shown at the end of this summary. Healthwatch also facilitated a meeting between the CCG, Surgery partners, patients and the Coldean Residents' Association on 18<sup>th</sup> January and to view the recording and to see further information on this meeting, please see <https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/report/2022-01-31/new-larchwood-patients-ask-their-surgery-better-service>.

## Methodology

The survey contained 26 quantitative forced choice questions and open-ended questions to assess the impact on patients of the change in opening hours, as well as the effectiveness of the service in general. The survey was open from 8<sup>th</sup> July until 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The survey also included 7 equalities questions.

New Larchwood surgery has 2,143 registered patients, of which 385 patients responded to the survey, providing a response rate of 18%.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "With major long-term condition" is used for patients who selected "yes, limited a lot" to the question "Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a physical or mental health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?"

<sup>2</sup> Carden & New Larchwood *practice* has 7,500 registered patients, of which 2,143 are reserved appointments at New Larchwood *surgery*. The survey questions were constructed to filter respondents to identify and pose most of the questions only to those patients who attended New Larchwood Surgery. The exception to this was a small number of questions that concerned Carden Surgery.

Following the survey invitation for follow-up conversations, semi-structured interviews were carried out. Further insight gained from these interviews, has been included in the narrative of the findings. Quotes used throughout the report also include some directly from these interviews.

## Findings

### Sample profile

New Larchwood surgery is based in Coldean (amongst the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods). While not the most deprived area, it is next to Moulsecomb, amongst the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, Carden surgery, where Coldean residents are being asked to attend as an alternative to New Larchwood surgery, is amongst the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

With a relatively higher level of deprivation, there is likely to be a greater need for health services in the area. Coldean residents are being offered a surgery, Carden, that is likely to already be in high demand.

385 patients responded to the survey. Excluding respondents who chose 'prefer not to say', most patients were 'White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh/Other white background' and heterosexual. Just over half were female and the majority were split almost evenly between Christian or no religion.

44% described themselves as being limited in day-to-day activities by a disability and 18% considered themselves to be an informal carer.<sup>4</sup>

Patients who were either informal carers or those with a disability were more likely to be negatively affected by the changes to opening hours. LGBTQ+ patients were also more likely to be negatively affected by the reduced hours.

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<sup>3</sup> New Larchwood surgery is based in Coldean, which, on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, is ranked 11,256 out of 32,844 neighbourhoods in England (a higher ranking means greater deprivation). Moulsecomb neighbourhood is ranked 2,136 (amongst the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country). Carden surgery is based in Carden Hill ranked 8,081 and is amongst the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods. For further information, please see: Indices of Deprivation <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>

<sup>4</sup> For further demographic information, please see Appendix 1 of this report.

## Key headlines:

### Service has become worse since reduced hours

- Half or more than half of the patients felt the following services at New Larchwood surgery had become worse since the change in terms of: Booking an appointment (56%); Time between booking & appointment (54%); and Choice of doctor (50%).
- Less than 15% of people found an improved service across the following: Appointment booking; Time between booking & appointment; waiting times on the appointment day; Choice of doctor; Quality of care from doctor/nurse; and Ease of getting prescribed medication.
- 59% of patients booking an appointment since the change, found it difficult to do so. Some patients either found it so hard they gave up or were not offered anything suitable, meaning they did not receive an appointment.
- General experience of New Larchwood surgery was positive - on average 80% of people felt they had a good experience. However:
  - Good experiences decreased after the opening hours changed, by a difference of up to 10 percentage points; and
  - Poor experiences increased after the opening hours changed, by a difference of up to 8 percentage points.
- In addition, 24 people mentioned the need for the nurse practitioner to be reinstated at the surgery. Comments indicated this had further negatively affected the service at New Larchwood surgery.

### Dissatisfaction with new hours

- 59% of people were dissatisfied with the new opening hours.
- Most patients (81%) stated they wanted to see New Larchwood surgery open for longer than the current hours of two mornings.

## Impact of change on patients

- 75% of people provided negative examples of how the reduced hours had affected them. People found booking an appointment and/or travelling to the alternative surgery difficult. People experienced negative impact on their mental health. 16 people avoided making an appointment due to this change.
- 50% of patients were satisfied with the overall service at New Larchwood surgery. Of those who were dissatisfied (18%) comments were mostly to do with the change in opening hours.
- 49% of patients said they were less satisfied with New Larchwood Surgery since the reduced hours; 46% of patients said their satisfaction levels had not changed.
- In comparison to other groups, patients with long-term conditions and informal carers were likely to be LESS satisfied with the service following the change. LGBTQ+ patients and women were also likely to be less satisfied.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the evidence shown in this report, from the experiences of 385 patients, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove recommends that Carden & New Larchwood Surgery, supported by the Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) should:

- Revert to the original opening hours at New Larchwood surgery, opening every day, with a mixture of mornings and afternoons.
- Reinstatement of the nurse practitioner at New Larchwood surgery on at least three days a week, with a mixture of mornings and afternoons.

Also, the Surgery, supported by the CCG, should consider the following:

- Address the lower satisfaction rates among informal carers, patients with long-term conditions and LGBTQ+ patients. In comparison to other patients, these demographic groups expressed lower satisfaction following the change in opening hours at New Larchwood surgery and lower satisfaction for mental health services.
- Provide the option of online booking for New Larchwood surgery.

## **Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group and Carden & New Larchwood Surgery response.**

Carden & New Larchwood Surgery and the Brighton & Hove NHS Clinical Commissioning Group would like to extend their thanks and gratitude to everyone who participated in providing their feedback and shared their experiences for Healthwatch Brighton & Hove's recent report since the New Larchwood branch surgery reduced its opening hours in April 2021.

We very much appreciate and value your input, and we will utilise and consider the feedback, comments and recommendations provided to help shape and improve the service for patients and staff.

Continuing to ensure that there are GP surgeries serving the local community with good and appropriate clinical care for many years to come is our priority. The catalysts for change in the decision to reduce the opening hours at the New Larchwood branch were the need for safety for practice staff as there was often only one practitioner working on site, stability in terms of the offer to patients, and the desire to dedicate more time to treating patients.

Patients from the branch surgery continue to benefit from the longer opening hours at the Carden Surgery, as well as the dedicated sessions at New Larchwood, and together we are committed to working together with patients, our communities and practice staff to ensure all patients can continue to access the support and care they need.

The GP practice is continuing to recruit to vacant positions, and the CCG is working closely with their team to support them in this, and to understand where improvements can be made to access.

Together, we look forward to continuing to engage with patient and community groups who were involved in the survey and report findings to listen to the feedback and work together to find solutions to help improve patient experience.