

**Enter and View visit  
The Neaman Practice, City of London**

**14 February 2019**



<b>Service</b>	General Practice
<b>Service address</b>	15 Half Moon Court London EC1A 7HF
<b>Provider name</b>	The Neaman Practice
<b>Date/Time of visit</b>	14/2/2019
<b>E&amp;V representative/s</b>	Catherine Perez Phillips Janet Porter Stuart MacKenzie
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<p><b>About Healthwatch enter and view visits</b></p> <p>The Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007 as amended by the 2012 Act and directed by Local Healthwatch Regulations 013 imposes a duty on health and social care providers (including the independent sector) to allow authorised representatives of Local Healthwatch to enter premises they own or control to observe the services being provided. These are legally binding directions and are often referred to as ‘the right to enter and view’.</p>	

## **1. The Visit**

### **Purpose of our visit**

We visited the Neaman Practice to:

- Observe services being provided at the Neaman Practice and interview patients about their experiences.
- Compile a report highlighting good practice and recommendations for improvement.

Our decision to visit was influenced by the following factors:

- Routine comments and feedback from service users received by Healthwatch City of London
- The Neaman Practice's position as the sole GP practice in the City of London

We will continue to monitor patients' experiences of the service to check that the changes being made are working and reflected in the National GP Patient Survey.

### **Acknowledgements**

Healthwatch City of London would like to thank the practice managers and staff for accommodating our visit and the patients for participating in our interviews. We are also grateful to our volunteer authorised representative for conducting the visit.

### **Important Information for management/provider**

- We expect the Neaman Practice to provide an 'action plan and response' to issues raised under 'Recommendations'
- Copies of this report will be circulated to City and Hackney CCG, the CQC and will be made available on the Healthwatch City of London website
- We will publish the Neaman Practice's Action Plan and Response along with our report

### **Disclaimer**

- Observations made in this report relate only to the visit carried out at Neaman Practice on 14 February 2019 which lasted for a total of three and a half hours
- This report is not representative of all patients of Neaman Practice on the day of the visit. It only represents the views 20 patients and two members of staff who were able to contribute within the restricted time available.

## 2. Key information about this provider

- Neaman Practice is based at 15 Half Moon Court, London, EC1A 7HF.
- The practice has 9,300 registered patients
- The building is purpose built and well maintained
- The practice is open every day during the week from 8.15am to 6pm apart from Friday when it closed between 1pm and 2pm
- Extended hours are available for appointments on Monday 6.30pm – 8pm
- Practice staff at the time of the visit:
  - 8 GPs - two GP partners and six salaried GP'S
  - 1 ST3 Registrar
  - 2 Practice Nurses and 1 Phlebotomist
  - Five receptionists
  - 1 Administrator
  - 1 Medical Secretary
  - 1 Practice Manager and 1 Business Practice Manager
- Appointments can be made online (24/7), by phone or face to face with reception staff. The phone lines open at 8.00am, and appointments line is open from 8.30am where patient can book appointments over the phone from 8.30am. Patients can come to the practice at 8.15am and book appointments face to face.
- Once the appointments for that day have been booked, patients with emergencies/urgent medical needs are triaged by the duty doctor who will call the patient back within two hours
- The practice has a website – this needs urgent updating
- The practice makes use of Language Line for translation services
- The Patient Participation Group (PPG) runs a quarterly focus group on a Thursday evening. Membership is advertised on the website and individuals are given a registration form to complete or can enquire at reception.
- The practice has the highest number of elderly patients for all practices in Hackney and City CCG.

## 3. Summary of findings/observations

**The following observations were noted during the visit:**

- Observed first aid box, defibrillator and fire alarms
- Good access for disabled people from the street
- Public toilets located on each floor
- Lots of posters on the wall, and leaflets in the window area but the displays were confused, and it was difficult to pick out important information



*Leaflets*



*Noticeboard*



*Free to use blood pressure machine*

## What patients told us

- They are happy with the quality of care they receive at the Neaman Practice
- They have a positive view of all the staff employed by the practice
- They were given sufficient time with doctors to discuss issues
- Some patients reported that making an appointment was difficult and that there was a significant wait to get a non-urgent consultation

## Physical environment/ cleanliness/hygiene

- The premises are accessed by a short flight of steps, or a ramp. The information outside the surgery giving the names of doctors, and opening hours, is very out of date
- An automatic door opens onto the reception area and ground floor waiting room. The environment was smart, although in need of some re-organisation. There are two other waiting rooms on the 1st and 2nd floors, reached by a single lift in which the light had failed, and so temporary lighting had been installed until the replacement part arrives
- There are toilets, including accessible toilets on each floor. These were clean when we visited
- The 1st floor waiting room, is pleasant with comfortable chairs and some pictures. The 2nd floor waiting area is spartan, with hard wooden seats, no pictures, reading matter, or toys for children, despite being busy on the day of our visit

- The surgery has a blood pressure machine on the ground floor for use by patients (slightly hidden away in a poorly-lit corridor), defibrillator
- The dedicated Neaman surgery noticeboard on the ground floor included items that were not GP-related
- No hand sanitizers, despite a recommendation from the last Patients Participation Group meeting. Nor was there a water dispenser.
- The self-service check-in screen was out of action. We understand from patients that it has not worked for months

## Transport

- The building is located close to the main residential areas in the City of London of the Barbican and Golden Lane Estate
- The small size of the City of London means most patients live within a short walk of the practice

## Patient centred care/dignity/safety

- A notice on the top of the reception desk advises patients to ask if they want to speak to staff in private – this notice is not visible to the majority of patients approaching the reception desk
- No measures in place to ensure that patients cannot overhear confidential conversations from staff talking on the phone or to other patients close to the reception desk.

## Communication with patients/ Information

- Information is displayed randomly and somewhat chaotically around the ground floor waiting room and reception desk, with important notices not necessarily in a prominent position
- The practice has a hearing loop
- The notice outside the surgery with doctors' names and opening times was out of date
- Staff have name badges, but they are not worn consistently by all staff
- A poster advises patients to ask for the complaints leaflet from reception

## Website

- The website is out of date, confusing and misleading, with many omissions, inaccuracies, and contradictory information
- Website is hard to navigate. For example, in one part of the site, it states that the surgery is closed at weekends, yet in another section it says there is a Saturday surgery, but does not make clear how to book such an appointment or who would be excluded
- Four sections under different headings detail opening hours and out-of-hours services, with contradictory information and contact numbers.
- A number of services offered at the Neaman Practice such as a foot clinic, (booked via St Leonard's) blood tests, and physiotherapy, are not mentioned.
- Details about who is entitled to a named GP are contradictory.
- The latest newsletter on the website is 18 months old.
- The website provides Google Translate option for patients for whom English is their second language.
- Website has zoom facility to enlarge text.

## Appointments system

- Appointments can be booked online from midnight for the next working day, on the phone from 8.30am or at the reception desk from 8.15am for the same day
- Once same day appointments have run out, patients with emergencies/urgent medical needs are referred to the duty doctor who calls them back within two hours, and triages them for an appointment based on urgency
- Saturday appointments have been available for the past year. These appointments cannot be used for medication reviews or for a referral to another service. These appointments can be booked through NHS 111 but this is not made clear on the practice website. The uptake has been low, possibly because Saturday appointments have not been well publicised

## 4. Patient feedback

The following patients were interviewed in the different waiting areas of the surgery (ground, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor).

### Patient 1.

Experience of Neaman is '*a bit mixed*'. The first appointment available online was six weeks away, so she phoned and was given an earlier date. Works at Barts so was aware of local healthcare services and the Saturday surgery, and in fact had been offered a Saturday appointment in the past when phoning. Also knew that blood tests could be done at Neaman, and that there was a physio. Reported that the average wait in the surgery before seeing the doctor was about 45 minutes.

### Patient 2.

She had been waiting half an hour to see the doctor on the day of our visit. Her opinion of the Neaman practice was '*Very good, they look after you.*' She had no regular doctor

### Patient 3.

She said she had '*Never seen a bad doctor*' at the Neaman. Nurses are '*amazing*' and would never go anywhere else. Her children and grandchildren had all been cared for by the practice. Receptionists were *also* '*lovely*' but visible name badges would be good. The text system works well. She was aware of the Saturday surgery. She always phones on the day for an appointment, and does not make forward appointments, however, this was not easy as she starts work at 7.30am and does not always have access to a phone at 8.30am when the lines open. She recounted a time when she called 178 times before getting through, (but was once on hold at Guys for two hours). There is a high turnover of doctors and she rarely sees the same one twice. She said photos of all the staff would be useful. We spoke to her in the top floor waiting room which she described as '*basic*'.

### Patient 4.

She has been registered at the Neaman practice for many years and overall is very happy with the care, and aware of all the different services available at the surgery. She mostly rings on the day to get an appointment, waiting until around 8.40am to get through rather than trying when the phone lines first open. She does not use the online booking system but probably would if it were easier. She said the self-service check-in (when working) is unnecessary, as it cannot cope if one arrives a minute or two late, in which case patients still have to go to the reception desk.

**Patient 5.**

Is always able to get an appointment on the day. Both medical staff and receptionists very good although it would be nice to have more doctors. One observation concerned the call-back service. If you miss the call, there is no way of calling back so you have to wait around. But she accepted there was no easy alternative.

**Patient 6.**

She described all the staff as 'great'. She was interviewed in the top floor waiting room where she found the seats very hard. She said the 1st floor waiting room was much nicer with more comfortable chairs. She was unaware of the Saturday surgery, but said this would have been very helpful as she has a child with special needs and it would be preferable to be able to see a doctor without missing school [NB a special needs child probably would not be eligible to be seen during Saturday surgery]

**Patient 7**

Overall he is satisfied with the GP service, including support staff. He did not use the website and ordered repeat prescriptions the old way, i.e. paper requests. He found difficulty in getting appointments, '*often three-quarters of an hour on the phone*'. He was unaware of Saturday surgery until very recently, when it was mentioned by one of the receptionists. He would like the GPs to be more in the loop when it comes to specialist care, i.e. recommendations and new drug monitoring. He has to go to the Royal London all the time rather than seeing a GP for updates. He needs a walking stick and has no access problems at the surgery, but finds it difficult to get to the Royal London because of the stairs (and no lifts) at Barbican and Whitechapel underground stations.

**Patient 8**

She is reasonably pleased with the overall service, but would like to see the same GP, and was unaware of the named GP system. She did not use the website. She said that she found the noticeboards cluttered and confusing. She was unaware of the Saturday surgery, auxiliary and other services.

**Patient 9**

He was overall satisfied with the practice, including both doctors and support staff. Would like to see the same GP, especially about long-term conditions, but it has been hard to do so. A doctor unfamiliar with the patient's condition has to take valuable time in the 10-minute slot to review medical background. He was not aware of the named GP system. He also was unaware that appointments could be booked in advance, and did not know about the Saturday surgery, but would like to have done. Had not used the Neaman or Patient Access websites. He was not fully aware of other services. Thought hand sanitizers would be a good idea. Overall, communications need to be improved through better noticeboards. Name badges and photos of medical and admin staff would be useful.

**Patient 10**

Overall, satisfied with GP surgery services. Knew about and used the Saturday service. Unaware of other services such as nail trim, blood tests or physio. Waiting rooms "okay". Although he had a walking stick, access not a problem. Name badges and photos of GPs and staff a good idea. He also mentioned that Barts' IT system for booking and test results was "chaotic". Does this have an impact on the Neaman surgery and its patients?

**Patient 11**

Overall, satisfied with Neaman practice. She makes appointments both online and by phone. Not easy to make same day urgent appointment. Usual to have 4 to 6 weeks wait when booking online. She felt that the GPs were adequately managing her long-term condition. The text messaging system works well. The waiting rooms were generally OK, reasonably comfortable. She did not feel that staff were proactive in flagging up other available services. General cleanliness of toilets etc was fine.

**Patient 12**

She reported being overall, reasonably satisfied. She said it was hard to get appointments, waiting a minimum of 10 minutes on the phone to speak to someone, even at non-peak times. She does not use the online booking system and was completely unaware of the Saturday clinic. She said staff do not flag up additional services. The text reminders regarding vaccinations etc are fine. She would like to see a receptionist on the 1st and 2nd floors as well as the ground floor. She often has to wait up to 40 minutes after her appointment time to see the doctor. She did not like the fact that a message had once been left on her home phone rather her personal mobile phone (re test results). She found the reception staff unhelpful on one occasion when she had an infection and was advised to see a specialist privately (which she did in the end). When attending a free health check-up, she was surprised that the nurses were pushing her to use statins, even though her test results were within normal parameters. She questioned whether the practice received a bonus for prescribing certain drugs.

**Patient 13**

She reported that it was easy to make an appointment, and that she was asked if she wanted a half hour extended appointment. She has seen the same GP for all her consultations (this will be her third) and reported that she definitely felt listened to in comparison with her previous GP.

**Patient 14**

Reported that it had been easy to register as a new patient – she had been asked to provide proof of address. She had called for an appointment and had got one the same day.

**Patient 15**

Has been seeing a specialist in relation to bowel cancer. Reported that it is a battle to get an appointment. He calls at 8.30am and rarely gets a same day appointment, nevertheless he said it usually work out OK.

**Patient 16**

Elderly woman in her 90s with her son, who reported that the surgery is very good at seeing her quickly and dressing her wound. They have enough time at appointments when needed and had a double appointment that day.

**Patient 17**

Reported that it is easy to get an appointment over the phone and that whenever he has called, he has managed to get an appointment on the same day. Online registration for appointments has, however, been difficult. He has enough time with the GP. He sees different GPs but he is happy with this. He would recommend the surgery to others.

**Patient 18**

The initial appointment to discuss her non-emergency took two weeks. She tends to come into the surgery to speak to reception staff as she lives very close by. Reception staff are very good, and there is a lot of continuity with the same people working at the practice for many years.

**Patient 20**

Reported that booking an appointment is always difficult because the practice is so busy. Normally he calls to make an appointment and would like it to be on the same day. Depending on the urgency the reception staff always find a time, but it can be a wait of two weeks. Reported that it is not easy to see the same doctor (in the last year has seen 2-3) and although they are all good, he does feel pressurised in terms of time. The repeat prescription system works well – he calls the pharmacy and they sort it out. The pharmacy had identified that he needed a blood test so he felt that monitoring is working well.

**Email comments received in response to Healthwatch City of London newsletter appeal for comments****Patient 21**

*'I would like to comment on one aspect of the Neaman Practice. I am 71 and it is impossible to obtain an appointment in under 5 weeks on their internet booking system - they won't make a future appointment over the phone. They operate a system of either it is an emergency (in which case you cannot reach them on the phone at 8.30) or you can wait over a month. a friend of mine in her 80s advised me that the only way to get an urgent appointment was to queue up well before 8.30 at the practice so you can grab a slot before the phone calls. I have caring responsibilities and am unable to do this even if I wanted to. On one occasion when they would only renew my statins for a month unless I saw the doctor for a routine check (which I was unaware I had to have) I had to write to point out that the earliest appointment was in 6 weeks' time. If they cannot offer a routine appointment within 3 weeks, they should say so clearly on their website.*

*I did once try to access the physiotherapist at the practice - recommended by the doctor - but I was told that the Practice Manager had not "opened any new slots". A complaint in writing elicited the spurious reasoning that the slots were not merely blocked but we would all be placed in a queue for appointments. A response that might have had some credibility if they had taken the names of those patients waiting. 5 years later I am still waiting!*

*I am afraid that the administrators need to develop a little more compassion and not to treat patients as simply raw material, but I have no complaint in respect of reception staff who struggle manfully. I would also point out that I owe my life to the cervical cancer screening service although before and after my diagnosis of cancer I never had one enquiry from the practice as to my welfare (7 years later). However, the receptionists were very kind.'*

**Patient 22**

*'I have been a patient of the Neaman Practice for many years. They are wonderful: unfailingly friendly, helpful and supportive.'*

**Patient 23**

*Although I see different doctors and occasionally nurses - and there has been significant turnover over the 4-5 years - they are consistently good, professional, caring etc.*

*The main areas for improvement are around the front desk / telephone service and general administration*

*A few of the front and telephone staff can still be rather brusque (despite obvious attempts over the years to improve this). There are a few notable exceptions who are the exact opposite. I can live with this but I have seen some patients finding this difficult.*

*My main point is that the administration is not always reliable. Over the last 6 months for example (i) they overlooked to call me in after a blood test, (ii) could not find all the documents they texted me to come and pick up then called me a month later to ask why I hadn't picked them up (I had already had the hospital appointment) and (iii) there is a lack of clarity on the status of another hospital appointment they have requested. Previously documents have been lost in the system. A friend was recently called under another name*

## 5. Staff comments

We had the opportunity to speak to the Practice Manager, Shahana Uddin who focuses mainly on direct patient matters and Business Practice Manager Vishnu Vallamkonda who has an IT and finance focus. Both were very welcoming and open in their discussions with us. We also spoke briefly to reception staff who were on duty.

### Summary of staff comments

- **Referrals:** Reported that patients can choose, with the aim being to offer three options. There may be issues with the hospital not accepting the patient, and it also depends on how long the patient is prepared to wait.
- **Website:** Vishnu Vallamkonda has only recently been employed by the practice. He is aware that the website is not up to scratch and is already making plans to completely overhaul the site.
- **Reception:** Staff reported good access to training, for example safeguarding and life support. They also reported being very busy "we could do with more staff because we are very busy"

## 6. Recommendations

**All recommendations are based on patients' feedback and our observations**

### Recommendation 1

The website needs a complete overhaul. We understand that this work is in progress and Healthwatch City of London volunteers are happy to assist.

### Recommendation 2

The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor waiting room needs improvement. This could be done simply by switching some of the hard, uncomfortable wooden chairs with a few of the cushioned ones in the other two waiting areas, adding another table or two, plus some reading matter, plants, toys for children.

**Recommendation 3**

The ground floor area needs to be reorganised so that there is more space, and therefore greater privacy around the reception desk, and room for a queuing system. Separation of reception duties and answering the telephone would also improve privacy.

**Recommendation 4**

The complaints leaflet needs to be readily available without having to be requested from the reception staff.

**Recommendation 5**

The display of names and photographs of all doctors, nurses, and staff in the surgery and on the website and would help patients to identify who is who. All medical and reception staff should consistently wear visible name badges.

**Recommendation 6**

The texting system works well for appointment reminders, and feedback. The same means of communication should be used for important announcements such as extended surgery hours.

**Recommendation 7**

There should be clarity about where patients can be, and are, referred to for tests, MRI scans, and specialist treatment. Feedback has indicated that the Homerton is unpopular with City residents, especially for those with mobility problems, because of the distance and time it takes by public transport from the Barbican area. Although hospital transport is offered, some people report that this takes longer because other patients are being picked up and dropped off. University College Hospital is much closer and more convenient.

**Recommendation 8**

There are challenges in collecting feedback from City residents in relation to health and social care services due to the small size of the resident population and the use of many health care services located outside of the City of London. Healthwatch City of London would like to start regular comment collecting sessions at the practice to monitor issues experienced by City residents in relation to health and social care

**7. Summary of demographic/equality information collected**

**The Neaman Practice has just over 9,000 patients**

Ethnic category	
White	17
White Other	1
Black or Black British	1
Asian or Asian British	1

Gender	
Male	6
Female	14

## 8. Neaman Practice Action Plan

Healthwatch City of London recommendation	Practice Response/Action Plan
The website needs a complete overhaul.	We are planning to overhaul our website in April 2019
The 2nd floor waiting room needs improvement.	We have added soft cushion chairs in the waiting area on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor.
The ground floor area needs to be reorganised so that there is more space around reception desk. Separation of reception duties and answering the telephone would also improve privacy.	We are consulting with our staff members and our patients in the next coming weeks to decide how we can reorganize the structure of the area
The complaints leaflet needs to be readily available	Complaints leaflet will be uploaded on the website and will be made available in all floors of the waiting area and is also available upon request
The display of names and photographs of all doctors, nurses, and staff	The practice is in current discussion with staff on how to best display our names and job titles for patient information
Increased use of texts to communicate important service announcements	We will continue to send text messages to patients and promote our services on a regular basis
There should be clarity about where patients can be, and are, referred to	We will make it clear when referring, what organisations are available to the patients for that specific service (if more than one is available).
Regular comment collecting sessions at the practice by Healthwatch City of London	Healthwatch and the Neaman Practice to continue working together to improve services for better patient outcomes.