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| **Report:** | National Complex Mesh Surgical Service  Patient Experience Questionnaire Cycle 3 Report |
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| **Purpose of Paper:** | For noting/discussion |
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| **Sponsoring Director:** | N/a |



**Purpose of Report**

This report shares key findings from the 3rd patient experience questionnaire carried out by the National Complex Mesh Surgical Service across June and July 2023. It highlights where patient experience has changed and identifies improvement themes for consideration and action by the service where appropriate.

**Background**

The questionnaire was developed by the National Complex Mesh Surgical Service in collaboration with the NHSGGC Patient Experience Public Involvement Team (PEPI Team). The purpose is to gather feedback from people who attended for appointments and/or surgery with the service, and to measure overall improvements in patient experience against previous rounds of feedback. The service is committed to learning from patient experience and using feedback to inform service improvement.

**Scope**

A total of 176 recipients were initially identified. A data check was carried out and found 21 recipients to be duplicates or having since sadly passed away. These were removed leaving a total sample of 155. Of this total:

* 122 people had attended Clinic K for appointments only. This includes 37 people who have elected to have surgery with an alternative provider
* 33 people attended for appointments at Clinic K and have gone on the have surgery with the service

All recipients were asked about their experience of attending appointments at Clinic K. The group of 33 patients who had surgery with the service were provided with an extended questionnaire and asked about their pre-surgery experience, in-patient stay and post-surgery experience. All recipients were also invited to return an Equalities Monitoring Form.

**Communication, collation and analysis**

The PEPI Team co-ordinated the process of sending the questionnaires and receiving and collating and analysing the responses. No staff from the service were involved in this activity. Anonymity was identified as an important factor and this was made explicit in the accompanying letter. Recipients were offered the choice of completing the questionnaire online, by telephone or returning a hard copy using a pre-paid envelope. The questionnaire and accompanying letter were sent on 9th June 2023 with a return date of 30th June 2023. Due to an initial low number of returns the deadline was extended to 14th July 2023, and a reminder letter was sent advising of the extended closing date. The online link closed on 14th July 2023 and the last hard copy return was received on 19th July 2023 (included). One person provided feedback via telephone.

The number of returns were as follows:

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Clinic appointment group** | **Clinic appointment and surgery group** |
| **Total completed** | \*51 | 7 |
| **Completed online** | 9 | 1 |
| **Returned via SAE** | 41 | 6 |
| **Completed by telephone** | 1 | 0 |
| **Possible number of returns** | 122 | 33 |
| **% return rate** | 42% | 21% |

\*24 of the 51 total responses received from recipients in the Clinic appointment group are from those who have elected to have surgery with an alternative provider.

One person who received an extended questionnaire as part of the clinic appointment and surgery group provided mixed responses to both closed and open-text questions, making it difficult to determine whether their feedback relates recent, or earlier surgery. At this time their feedback has been collated and included as part of the appointment and surgery group, however pending further analysis to help better understand the exact pathway of this particular patient it may be they are moved across to the clinic appointment (only) group for more accurate reporting.

A total of 58 responses represents a combined return rate of 38%, a drop from the last cycle at 42%. This is still a credible sample size, however an early recommendation is to explore the possible factors that may have impacted on the number of returns, and identify future actions to mitigate these factors.

43 of the 58 total recipients completed an Equalities Monitoring Form, representing a 74% return rate. A summary of the Equalities Monitoring Form data can be found here:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?subpage=design&FormId=veDvEDCgykuAnLXmdF5Jmo62zbSzosNIpQmFlYurRrZUMkY0RDVFNDMxNzFSNVAxWEdOMkRITDdKVS4u&Token=94ddd0fa5baf4aa1ab1f04329c8323dc>

**Questions**

A mixture of closed and open-ended questions were offered which is standard for these types of questionnaires. However, the high number of respondents who chose to return a hard copy has created small anomalies in the data, with some questions not always answered fully, accurately or at all. An online questionnaire mitigates this risk by using branching and skip logic to guide the recipient through the questions and restrict access to non-relevant ones, thus avoiding any gaps or anomalies.

Whilst this issue did not have a significant impact on the overall integrity of the feedback, it should be considered as part of a wider discussion on future methods for collecting routine patient feedback for the service. It is recognised that this patient group broadly reflects an older demographic, including disabled people, who are known to experience higher levels of digital exclusion and more likely to respond to traditional engagement methods.

Both questionnaires asked respondents to share the first 3 digits of their postcode. This information does not identify any individuals to either the PEPI Team or the service and is not included in this report. It is used only to help us better understand any trends or patterns in the experiences of people using our services.

**Summary of Key Feedback**

1. **Before your appointment**

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| **In summary:** |
| * People’s experience of communication prior to attending for their appointment was mainly influenced by whether they attended before or after June 2022 * Some of the service changes and improvements introduced in 2022 are mentioned in the more positive feedback * The pre-appointment telephone call was well rated * Several people mentioned the lack of contact information e.g. telephone numbers on leaflets and letters as an area of ongoing frustration |

**Main findings**

We asked people when they first attended Clinic K for an appointment; either before or after June 2022. We wanted to better understand if changes and improvements implemented between January and June 2022 were making a difference to peoples’ experience, and if this was reflected in their feedback.

* 22 people attended their first appointment at Clinic K prior to June 2022
* 25 people attended their first appointment since June 2022.

This information is helpful when it comes to understanding the mixed nature of feedback provided.

We particularly wanted to know about their experience of communication with the service prior to attending for an appointment. This included written and verbal communication.

We asked if they felt they were given the necessary information in advance to help prepare and plan for the appointment.

Yes 18

No 12

Unsure 2

From the open-ended responses provided, people who had their first appointment before June 2022 were more likely to be critical about communication. Examples of critical feedback include:

*“No information received other than just basic appointment letters”*

*“I wasn’t told beforehand how many people might be in the room”*

*“I didn’t know who would be there, how long it would last, what would be done”*

There were two negative experiences from people who attended after June 2022:

*“The leaflet was lacking – need information on treating complications from mesh removal for incontinence”*

*“Contact numbers for the service missing - would be good to have a liaison person/point of contact for pre and post appointment queries”*

We also wanted to know what was working well.

The majority of respondents who answered this question (18) told us they did get the necessary information to plan and prepare for their appointment. All 25 people who said they’d had their first appointment since June 2022 confirmed they’d had a telephone call from the service prior to their appointment. We asked them on a scale of 1-10 how useful this call was in helping them to plan and prepare. The average score was 7/10.

*“The phone call had good information and helped manage my expectations - felt I had an ally in the team on my side”*

Finally, we asked what else the service could do to improve communication prior to attending for appointments.

Additional feedback included:

*“Please make the font on the letter larger – very difficult to read and amount of information is quite overwhelming”*

*“Being forewarned that a urine sample might be required on arrival”*

1. **At the clinic**

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| **In summary:** |
| * The data points to a drop in the total number of people expressing strong degrees of satisfaction with their Clinic K experience, although satisfaction levels remain high overall at 7/10 * In general, people who attended for appointments prior to June 2022 were far more likely to score ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ for almost all statements * 6 out of 7 people from the group who have had surgery with the service consistently scored ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ for all statements * In general, people who attended for appointments after June 2022 also scored ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ for the majority of statements, but less consistently * Those who have elected to have surgery with an alternative provider were more likely to indicate a lower satisfaction level in proportion to the wider group, with half (12) scoring ‘somewhat’ or ‘strongly disagree’ across the majority of statements * The areas that scored lowest, and received more critical feedback than others in the open- text responses related to waiting times, the reception and waiting area, pre-appointment written communication and appointment scheduling |

**Main findings**

We asked all 58 respondents for feedback on key aspects of their Clinic K experience. Collated feedback data is presented below. The column on the right shows the % variance in positive feedback (strongly agree/agree/neither) compared to Cycle 2 in June 2022.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree | N/a | Up/ down/ static |
| On arrival it was easy to find my way to Clinic K | 46 | 22 | 14 | 14 | 4 |  | Down  18% |
| Reception staff were polite and helpful | 66 | 8 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 4 | Down  12 % |
| The waiting area was welcoming | 42 | 26 | 14 | 14 | 4 |  | Down 18% |
| Waiting time to be seen was acceptable | 64 | 14 | 10 | 4 | 8 |  | Down 12% |
| Everyone involved in my appointment introduced themselves | 62 | 18 | 12 | 6 | 2 |  | Down 8% |
| Clinic staff were polite and helpful | 66 | 12 | 8 | 12 | 2 |  | N/a |
| Any concerns I had were fully addressed | 50 | 18 | 14 | 8 | 8 | 2 | N/a |
| I felt listened to | 46 | 18 | 12 | 12 | 12 |  | Down 24% |
| I had enough time to ask questions | 50 | 16 | 16 | 8 | 8 | 2 | N/a |
| I felt involved in decisions about my care | 48 | 20 | 8 | 12 | 6 | 6 | Down 20% |
| I was given the option to have a family member/friend present | 66 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 2 | N/a |
| I was offered option to have discussion/notes shared to me afterwards | 38 | 12 | 6 | 24 | 16 | 4 | N/a |
| I was able to discuss options and given information I needed to help understand them | 48 | 16 | 2 | 20 | 10 | 4 | N/a |

We asked respondents if they wanted to highlight anything especially positive about their Clinic experience, and 33 people gave responses. The main positives related to:

* Staff care, compassion and behaviour
* Consistency of staff (seeing the same team)
* Clarity of communication and information sharing during appointment

*“I felt extremely supported by nurses, Drs, psychologist and physio”*

*“They were very straight to the point, which I appreciated”*

*“Excellent approach using the appointment as an MDT enabling the opportunity to ask questions to all disciplines”*

45 people provided general praise about staff across the service, and specific team members including Dr Reynolds, Seonaid Bradford, Dr Tyagi, Dr Guerrero and Dr Wright were mentioned in a number of responses.

We also wanted to know if there is anything about the Clinic experience that could be improved. 43 responses were received. The main improvement themes related to:

* Waiting times, both for referral to the Clinic and during the appointment itself
* Pre-Clinic information in leaflets and appointment letters
* Unwelcoming reception and waiting area (not staffed)
* Access at VACH, especially parking
* Scheduling of appointments for those travelling from other parts of Scotland

*“Waiting times are too long - I don't have a date for a follow up appointment and don't expect to get one this year”*

*“The waiting area was empty - no staff and no one there – unwelcoming”*

*“I only received 2 appointment letters - one for clinic and one for phone appt with psychologist. No information was included at all, no leaflet, or anything about role of psychologist, and the number came up as 0800 so I nearly missed it - I thought maybe spam caller, but it kept ringing so I answered it”*

*“The clinic itself was not good - appointment times didn't account for people travelling hundreds of miles. A lot more could be done to remove this extra stress”*

Finally, we asked people in both groups to rate their overall experience at Clinic K where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent:

* Clinic only group 6.5/10
* Clinic and surgery group 8/10
* Average: 7/10
* Average in 2022: 9/10

A direct comparison with satisfaction levels from previous cycles is not particularly helpful, given that we know some respondents gave feedback based on their experience of appointments prior to service changes and improvements made from January 2022 onwards, and some additional questions were also added for this cycle.

1. **Care, communication and engagement just before having surgery**

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| **In summary:** |
| * 7 people who have had surgery with the service responded * The overwhelming majority of feedback on their pre-surgery experience is positive * 1 person who provided mixed and/or critical feedback may not have had recent surgery and their pathway through the service needs to be clarified * Positive feedback on patient journey, person-centred care, communication and compassion of staff feature strongly * 1 person reported a negative experience due to an error/miscommunication leading to an avoidable stressful and upsetting experience, which despite being quickly resolved had an negative impact on overall experience |

**Main findings**

We asked people who have had surgery with the service to share feedback about key aspects of their patient journey, treatment and care. Collated % feedback is provided below. As noted in the introduction to this report, anomalies can occur when paper copies of questionnaires are used. One person who received an extended questionnaire as part of the clinic appointment and surgery group provided mixed responses to both closed and open-text questions, making it difficult to determine whether their feedback relates recent, or earlier surgery. At this time their feedback has been collated and included as part of the appointment and surgery group, however pending further analysis to help better understand their exact pathway, they may be moved to the clinic appointment (only) group for more accurate recording in a later version of this report.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree |
| I was given all the information I needed to help understand what would happen during surgery | 72 |  | 14 | 14 |  |
| I was given information to help me understand how I would feel after surgery | 72 |  | 14 |  | 14 |
| I had enough time to ask questions | 72 | 14 |  | 14 |  |
| I felt listened to | 72 |  | 14 |  | 14 |
| I was treated with dignity and respect at all times | 72 |  | 14 | 14 |  |

We asked people if there was any additional feedback they wanted to share about care, communication and engagement just before having surgery. Positive feedback included:

*“From arriving at the hospital early morning, everything was so well organised and step by step I knew what was happening”*

*“Excellent treatment and guidance. Everything was transparent and I was involved in every step, with clear explanations given”*

*“Nursing staff were first class. The nurse who took me for the anaesthetic room was amazing - really put me at ease and explained everything as it happened”*

One person shared a negative experience:

*“On the day of my operation I was approached by Dr Vladimir whom I'd never met before, who said I was to get part of the mesh removed, and I said no I was to have a full removal, but he said no again, only part removal. I felt something was wrong as I'd been told by Dr Tyagi that partial means mesh was coming out but leaving some in position. Really, I felt sick as first I was introduced to Dr Tyagi and team who were to be with me during surgery then everything changed, so I said I wasn't going through with it. I went home totally upset”*

The respondent did confirm in later in the questionnaire that the issue was subsequently resolved and they went on to have full removal as expected three weeks later, however they stressed the negative impact this had on their mental health and wellbeing, as well as their confidence in the service, despite an eventual positive outcome.

1. **Care, communication and engagement during your stay on Ward 49**

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| **In summary:** |
| * Feedback about Ward 49 scored extremely highly across all aspects of the in-patient experience * Staff care, compassion and attitude were highlighted * One person mentioned that having other women to talk to made her stay on the ward easier, and provided valuable peer support, which could be explored further |

**Main findings**

We asked for feedback about key aspects of their in-patient stay on Ward 49.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree |
| I felt the ward atmosphere and environment was welcoming | 83 | 17 |  |  |  |
| I experienced a high standard of care from everyone | 83 | 17 |  |  |  |
| I was as physically comfortable as I could have expected after having surgery | 83 | 17 |  |  |  |
| I was able to ask staff for help when I needed it | 83 | 17 |  |  |  |
| I saw someone from the Complex Mesh Surgical Service before being discharged | 83 | 17 |  |  |  |
| The discharge process was smooth | 83 | 17 |  |  |  |

We asked people if there was any additional feedback they wanted to share about their in-patient experience on Ward 49. Feedback included:

*“Amazingly friendly staff who made the stay in Ward 49 a pleasure”*

*“Myself and a few of the other ladies became very friendly and this helped with recovering. The week I was there it was great weather, the view outside was lovely and all the staff on shift were caring, attentive and helpful”*

1. **Care, communication and engagement with the Complex Mesh Surgical Service following surgery**

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| **In summary:** |
| * 6 out of 7 people rated their overall experience of post-surgery contact very highly * 1 person rated post-surgery care, communication and engagement poorly but may not have had recent surgery; their pathway through the service needs to be clarified |

**Main findings**

We wanted to better understand peoples’ experience of the post-surgery care, communication and engagement from the service, introduced as part of the programme of service changes and improvements in 2022. We asked people to rate their overall experience:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Excellent | Very Good | Good | Fair | Poor | Not applicable |
| One week | 72 | 14 |  |  | 14 |  |
| Four week | 72 | 14 |  |  | 14 |  |
| 6 week | 72 | 14 |  |  | 14 |  |

We also asked some specific questions about different aspects of post-surgery contact with the service. Collated % responses are provided below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree |
| I had access to post-surgery advice and support as and when I needed it | 58 | 14 | 14 |  | 14 |
| Follow up contact from the service took place at appropriate times | 72 | 14 |  |  | 14 |
| I was treated with sensitivity and compassion by the service | 72 | 14 |  |  | 14 |
| Any concerns I had post-surgery were filly addressed during contact with the service | 72 | 14 |  |  | 14 |
| I felt listened to | 72 | 14 |  |  | 14 |
| Follow up contact worked well and has helped me to manage my post-surgery treatment and care | 72 | 14 |  |  | 14 |

Examples of positive feedback include:

*“I did have a few questions which were answered either during the conversation or in a return call very quickly after a phone consultation”*

*“I had good communication with the nurse and physio but the operation itself has left me completely incontinent. I've been told Glasgow can't do the required operation to correct this and I've now seen Dr Christie at Perth Royal”*

*“I was happy with all of my care”*

*“I suffered for 13 years with mesh problems and now I feel so much more comfortable. However my bladder is now incontinent, I'm getting tests and hopefully soon this can be sorted for me”*

Finally, we asked people to tell us if they were waiting for a follow-up appointment, and if so, how long they had waited. Four people told us they were currently waiting. One person said they’d had no contact since August 2022. The three others said they had appointments scheduled to take place in either August or September 2023.

1. **Other feedback**

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| **In summary:** |
| * Feedback shared by some respondents in this section relates to their initial experience of having mesh surgery, and the overall negative impact mesh has had on their health and wellbeing |

We invited people to share any other feedback they might have about their experience of the National Complex Mesh Surgical Service. This is a standard practice in patient experience questionnaires and can generate useful feedback that may not be captured elsewhere. Equally, there is a risk that feedback may be shared about experiences, issues or concerns that are not necessarily relevant to, or about the service itself. 35 additional pieces of feedback were received. The majority could be described as more critical feedback.

A cross section of positive feedback includes:

*“I think it is a fantastic start. Compassion and care goes a long way. There is a strong need for specialist help in the leg and hip area re mobility - to understand what is going on and why it's being affected so badly”*

*“It's the way the whole NHS should be run - the staff are a credit”*

*“For now it's conservative management and no surgery but I'm confident in the team that if that were to change they would support me all the way”*

A cross section of more critical feedback includes:

*“Appointments are taking too long - first appointment was Jan 23 then a follow up call in Feb 23, and nothing since. My condition is getting worse and very little help available”*

*“I had a 9am appointment but travelling from Aberdeen so I had to stay overnight in Glasgow with a 4hr drive each way”*

*“Waiting time is terrible and the clinic was empty”*

*“I was sent to the clinic as I was told the mesh implant had failed, and that the problem could not be treated in Lerwick or Aberdeen, but the clinic was insistent it could be dealt with back home and dismissed what I'd been told. I would like this mesh removed completely - I feel let down and bewildered”*

Several respondents made suggestions on how patient experience could be improved:

*“It would help if patients could get direct phone number, email address or some sort of contact details - very frustrating to get letters with no contact information on them”*

*“Some more information in advance would be helpful - who I was expected to see e.g. psychologist, or physio, or both - and what examinations to expect. Still waiting for physio appointment and feels like a long time”*

*“Include information on parking, for people who don't know the area. The staff were great but it would have worked better for me to have a lot of the information in advance - my memory works better that way - I've already forgotten some of the information I was given”*

*“The appointment is overwhelming – needs better paced so information can be absorbed”*

Providing feedback

One person contacted the PEPI Team directly to raise a concern that they could not leave feedback via the Care Opinion website. This caused considerable frustration and the person was considering making a complaint about the lack of opportunities to give feedback about their experience.

The PEPI Team opened an investigation with Care Opinion on behalf of the person in question, maintaining contact throughout and offering alternative ways to give feedback, which include direct contact with the service. When people leave feedback via Care Opinion they are asked for their postcode and the system searches for words, phrases etc. that relate to services provided by their home health board. As the service is hosted by NHSGGC, patients living in other health board areas were not being offered the option of providing feedback, as the service is not ‘tagged’ as being provided in their area. NHSGGC and Care Opinion have now resolved this issue and all feedback pertaining to the National Complex Mesh Surgical Service or stories containing the word or phrases including the word ‘mesh’ will be automatically shared to NHSGGC, and signposted to other health boards as and where appropriate.

National Complex Mesh Surgical Service website

We shared the link to the recently created web page for the service, and invited people to share their experience on navigation, ease of use, design and content. Only 3 people shared any feedback:

*“I found the pathway from the website impossible to follow, in fact it was so unclear it left me feeling annoyed and I closed the webpage! So this question about the webpage is the only negative section”*

*“It’s okay but very cluttered and not easy to read on a phone”*

*“I got on to the web page no bother then it was too complicated and didn't find the information all that helpful”*

1. **Emerging improvement themes for consideration and action**

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| **Emerging theme** | **Areas of focus** |
| **Communication (written, verbal and online)** | * Lack of contact details/numbers on appointment letters and leaflets * Website not user-friendly * Information on specific aspects of living with mesh, mesh surgery, impact, options etc. not readily available * Some people not clear about pathway into/through the service |
| **Clinic K waiting area and reception** | * No reception staff causing anxiety and confusion for some * Environment perceived as unwelcoming/cold |
| **Appointment planning** | * More sensitive scheduling of appointments for people travelling from other parts of Scotland |
| **MDT arrangements** | * Some people mentioned pacing of appointments, length of time waiting in between consultation, examination etc. |
| **Access/facilities at VACH** | * Car parking at VACH * Communication in advance of appointments about the facilities at VACH |
| **Waiting times** | * Evidence of increasing frustration around waiting times, for both first and follow up appointments |
| **Local treatment and care arrangements** | * Impact of travel to the service for people living in more remote areas of Scotland, and a question around if appointments can be done differently for these patients |
| **Providing feedback** | * Work with PEPI team to design a patient feedback ‘plan’ for routine collection via Care Opinion and other routes |
| **Future patient experience surveys** | * Work with PEPI team to discuss options for future patient experience and engagement activity |

(Ends)