Improving the patient experience
A training DVD resource for GP practices

“A fantastic resource for practice managers and receptionists… a must-watch.”

Practice Management Network Chair, Sandy Gower
First impressions count. This training resource is designed to help you deliver high-quality, patient-focused services. It will not only be helpful for GP receptionists and practice managers, but all those involved in delivering primary care services.

Contents

Introduction from Sandy Gower, Practice Management Network Chair 4

How the DVD works 6

Module 1: Good customer care 8

Module 2: Improving access for disabled patients 12

Module 3: Improving access for black and minority ethnic patients 16

Module 4: Marketing your practice 20

Next steps 25

“This training booklet, along with the accompanying DVD, is a valuable training resource that will enable the whole team to focus on the patient experience. Each module on the DVD is covered in this booklet.”

RCGP Chairman, Professor Steve Field
Introduction
from Sandy Gower, Practice Management Network Chair

The NHS Practice Management Network is a network run by practice managers, for practice managers. It offers support and opportunities for continued professional development throughout GP surgeries.

People come into practice management from all walks of life, and our roles can differ significantly. However, we all strive to reach the same goals; delivering high quality healthcare services and reaching out to local communities to make a difference to patients’ lives.

To redress the lack of resources currently available to train and support receptionists delivering NHS services, the Network has created a DVD training resource along with this booklet. The DVD features four short training films based on the most common customer service issues that a GP practice might encounter. These are:

- Good customer care
- Improving access for disabled patients
- Improving access for black and minority ethnic patients
- Marketing your practice.

GP receptionists are often the first point of contact for a patient so it’s vital that they make a positive impression. If receptionists are welcoming and helpful, your patients will feel valued and are more likely to have a good experience while visiting your practice.

Practice Management Network Chair, Sandy Gower
How the DVD works

Your training DVD is about 30 minutes long and based around the daily events of two GP practices: City Point and Gartmoor.

During the 10 minute introduction you will see the staff at each practice deal with a variety of different situations. Think about the right and wrong ways in which they went about their work.

This is followed by four training modules lasting about five minutes each. You will see some of the scenes from the introduction again, along with expert and real-life comments. Try to follow each module with a team discussion and ask yourselves: what would you have done in the same situation? How could the character have dealt with the situation better? Do you need to make any changes in your practice, and if so, how will you do that?

Meet the characters

At City Point

**Anil** is the practice manager at City Point.

**Claudia** is a receptionist. She needs to improve her skills in supporting disabled patients.

**Sanjit** is a receptionist. He needs to improve his customer care skills.

At Gartmoor

**Harriet** is a receptionist. She's very experienced but she needs to improve her skills in supporting minority ethnic patients.

**Tess** is a receptionist. She's new to the job and has some good ideas about how to improve services.

**Jenny** is the practice manager at Gartmoor.

**Derek** is Tess's grandfather. He is recovering from a recent stroke.
Good
customer care

Working on a busy reception is both rewarding and challenging. As well as dealing with a constant stream of patients there are telephone calls to manage, follow-up appointments to book, prescriptions to find and much more.

Why is customer care important?
Maintaining a friendly, welcoming atmosphere at the practice is not always easy and it can feel overwhelming when several patients are trying to gain your attention, but it is vitally important that each patient feels valued.

How to get started
Patients see themselves as your customers and you should also try to view them in this way. They expect and deserve the same good service from you as they would from any other service provider.

- Friendly reception staff can help patients relax in a potentially stressful situation.
- Reception staff often gain better job satisfaction from delivering a more personalised service.
- Good care helps to retain patients.
- A patient-focused service usually means fewer complaints and less stress for all staff.

If you experience bad service in a café you are unlikely to return; likewise, if a patient has a bad experience at your practice, they may take the decision to re-register somewhere else.
Key questions to ask

Does your practice measure patient satisfaction; for example by using real-time patient feedback, surveys, or a suggestion box?

Does measuring patient experience indicate any areas for your practice to improve on?

What steps could your practice take to tackle the key issues addressed in the film?
Improving access for disabled patients

Almost every practice will have some disabled patients. However, this group often report that their experiences in using primary care services can be frustrating and confusing.

Why is disability access important?

In the film we see a disabled patient complaining that he was unable to hear Tess call him for his appointment, he is frustrated and angry. Luckily there are lots of simple, practical approaches to improving the experience of disabled patients, many of them based around staff awareness and good customer care.

How to get started

In the film we see Anil running a patient participation group that results in the practice introducing ‘pop-up’ alerts to some patients’ details, alerting the receptionist on duty to any special requirements.

How does your practice measure up?

Does it address the needs of:

- Deaf patients?
- Blind patients?
- Patients with physical disabilities?
- Patients with learning disabilities?
Key questions to ask

What is your practice doing to help disabled patients?

How could your services be improved?

Having watched the DVD, what is the next thing you are going to do to improve access for disabled patients?
Improving access for black and minority ethnic patients

The City Point practice has a diverse inner-city practice population. Both receptionists are bilingual and are used to dealing with different cultural needs. The quieter Gartmoor practice doesn’t have many patients from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. Harriet struggles to deal with a Roma patient.

Why is cultural sensitivity important?

The UK has a large BME population. The 2007 GP Patient Survey showed that some BME groups were significantly less satisfied with access to their local surgery than other groups. If we are to deliver our vision of world-class primary care for the entire population and reduce health inequalities, we must learn to better understand the cultural differences and sensitivities of all our patients.

How to get started

It’s important to remember that a GP practice can be an intimidating place for some people, especially those who don’t speak English or who come from a different culture.

Here are some examples:

- A family who has recently arrived in the country may not speak English, or understand the primary care system.
- Some patients might only want to see same-sex doctors.
- A person of Islamic faith may be fasting during Ramadan, which might affect the doctor’s advice on medication.

Try to consider what a BME patient might be thinking or feeling when they arrive at the practice. Always give them your full attention and be ready to provide help if they need it.
Key questions to ask

Do you monitor the ethnicity and preferred languages within your practice?

Does your practice workforce reflect the local community? What could your practice do to connect better with the local community?

Do you make use of services such as Language Line or the languages information on the NHS Choices website?
Marketing your practice

The practices on the DVD use two very different approaches to marketing.

The Gartmoor practice uses a notice board, which tends to get overcrowded. As a result the patients, including Tess’s dad, don’t know about the extra services that the practice could offer them. City Point, on the other hand, uses a flat-screen TV to promote its additional services and provide seasonal updates.

Why is marketing the practice important?

Patient engagement is a vital activity for any practice. It helps patients to understand the variety of services on offer and how they can access them. Effective marketing can also help you support patients in making their own decisions about healthcare.

How to get started

In the film we see Jenny gather the practice staff together and encourage them to think about how they could improve the services they offer their patients.
Key questions to ask

- What do you want to communicate?
- Who are you targeting?
- How are you going to market your services?

You can use these three questions as a starting point for all your marketing activity. For example, ask yourself:

**What do you want to communicate?**

- Are you running new clinics, such as weight management or sexual health?
- Are you offering specific seasonal services, such as flu jabs?
- Do you offer convenient appointment times, such as in the evenings or weekends?
- Can patients book their own appointments over the internet?

**Who are you targeting?**

- All patients? Or just a selected group?
- Teenage patients might be interested in a chlamydia screening clinic.
- Older patients will be interested in flu jab clinics.

**How are you going to market your services?**

- What practice options are available to you e.g. posters, LCD display, website banners?
- If you have e-mail addresses, could you send a promotional e-mail to patients?
- Could you place an ad in the local paper or a poster in a local newsagents?
- Could you create a leaflet and distribute it in nearby businesses, such as pharmacies or libraries?

Continued on next page >
We hope you have found your training DVD useful. If the film has given you some good ideas on how to improve the services of your practice, be sure to share them with your colleagues via the Practice Management Network. Everyone can make an important contribution to improving patient services.

For further tips and advice please refer to the Practice Management Network guide ‘Improving access, responding to patients’. You should have a copy of this guide in your practice, but you can also access it online at: www.practicemangement.org.uk

The Practice Management Network website is a useful resource for GP practice staff. As well as advice and guidance you can also access expert blogs, read useful case studies and join discussion forums aimed at improving best practice.
Resources

The Practice Management Network is run by practice managers, for practice managers. For useful guides, discussion forums and networking tools, please visit www.practicemanagement.org.uk

The Multikulti website provides accurately translated advice and information in languages other than English. It includes information on how to register with a GP and with NHS primary care. www.multikulti.org.uk

NHS Direct provides a confidential interpreter service in several languages. www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or call 0845 4647

The Race Equality Foundation runs a programme that supports PCTs around the country working in partnership with local BME communities. www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk

RNIB provides information for professionals who can make a difference to the lives of blind and partially sighted people. www.rnib.org.uk

Sign Translate is an internet-based translation program that converts English to British Sign Language (BSL) and 12 British minority languages. www.signtranslate.com

BrowseAloud software reads web pages aloud for people who may find it difficult to read online. www.browsealoud.com

The NHS Brand Guidelines website provides advice and guidance on producing written information, as well as templates to get you started. www.nhsidentity.nhs.uk/tools-and-resources/patient-information

The Growing Patient Participation campaign aims to see more Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) set up across the country, and to strengthen existing PPGs. www.growingppgs.com/

“Really informative and typifies what actually happens in a real general practice.”

BMA Chairman, Dr Laurence Buckman
“Practice managers who want to expand the skills and knowledge of their staff will find this a really useful tool, particularly when thinking about access to the practice by members of the community who are disadvantaged in some way. The DVD raises useful points about reception as a first point of contact and the importance of good customer service.”

RCGP General Practice Foundation Practice Management Forum Co-Lead, Fiona Dalziel