

## **DCH SEXUAL HEALTH CLINICS GIVEN TOP MARKS**

EXCELLENT results have been awarded in a recent patient survey of Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) clinics run by Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. The survey included the DCH-led GUM and sexual health clinics in Weymouth, Dorchester, Bridport and Blandford.

Overall, patients reported an extremely high level of satisfaction with all aspects of care offered by the GUM clinics. In particular, 98-99% of patients felt they were treated well, their privacy respected, and that they were listened to and their views taken on board. The survey also highlighted that treatment was given in a clear and understandable way, and patients were involved in all decisions made about their care.

This survey demonstrates an extremely high-level of patient satisfaction with the GUM service provision and staff. In 2005, access to GUM clinics was identified as an NHS priority, with a target set nationally for all patients to be offered an appointment within 48 hours by March 2008. The West Dorset GUM service achieved this by December 2007, and has consistently reached it ever since.

The survey revealed that most patients are seen at a clinic time and place that suits them; however the GUM service recognises that there are patients in rural areas that are not easily able to access the clinics. It is working closely with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to improve access to services, including closer links with the Contraceptive and Sexual Health (CASH) service and with general practice. Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust also regularly funds new techniques to ensure high-level patient care is available.

Recently text messaging has been incorporated as a clinic-patient communication tool – it's ideally suited to remind patients about appointments, send test results and contact those needing possible treatment – and has

been widely adopted in West Dorset GUM clinics run by the Hospital. Since its launch last year, the scheme has improved attendance and supported patient care, especially among younger patients who may forget appointments or be worried that test results might be sent to their home addresses.

The West Dorset services run by DCH cover a catchment area of 220,000 individuals, and are run from the hub of the GUM service at the Park Centre for Sexual Health in Weymouth, supported by satellite clinics in Dorchester, Bridport and Blandford.

As well as providing sexual health advice, screening, diagnosis, and treatment, some clinics also provide contraception and specialist clinics for pelvic pain and genital skin problems. Opening times cater for the demands of all individuals with a mixture of walk-in and appointment clinics, together with clinics held outside normal working hours, including lunchtime and evening options, as well as one early morning clinic.

Genitourinary Medicine Consultant Cecilia Priestley said: 'These are terrific results that highlight the professionalism and friendliness of all the staff, and their ability to provide patients with the best level of sexual health services. We're pleased with the results, especially with the appreciative feedback about our brilliant staff. This is highlighted by the finding that, in spite of the highly personal nature of the specialty, 99% of patients feel that their privacy is respected. We also continually strive to improve facilities and will work with the Primary Care Trust to review our service, ensuring we continue to offer patients the very best level of care and treatment in future years.'

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