



## BECCLES MEDICAL CENTRE AND PPG NEWSLETTER No 7

April 2025

Ta daaaaaa... at last Spring really does appear to be springing – isn't it wonderful that the changes of the seasons are generally reliable and we can begin to shed the thermals and duvet coats as the sun shines and the increased temperatures draw us outside once more for a dose of good old (and very important) Vitamin D. I am struck by how much our health is linked to our environment and how small things like being able to expose some of our skin to natural sunshine every day can be so good for us. With the addition of some frosty mornings to kill off bugs and viruses and longer days coming soon it is hard not to feel a bit joyous and optimistic.

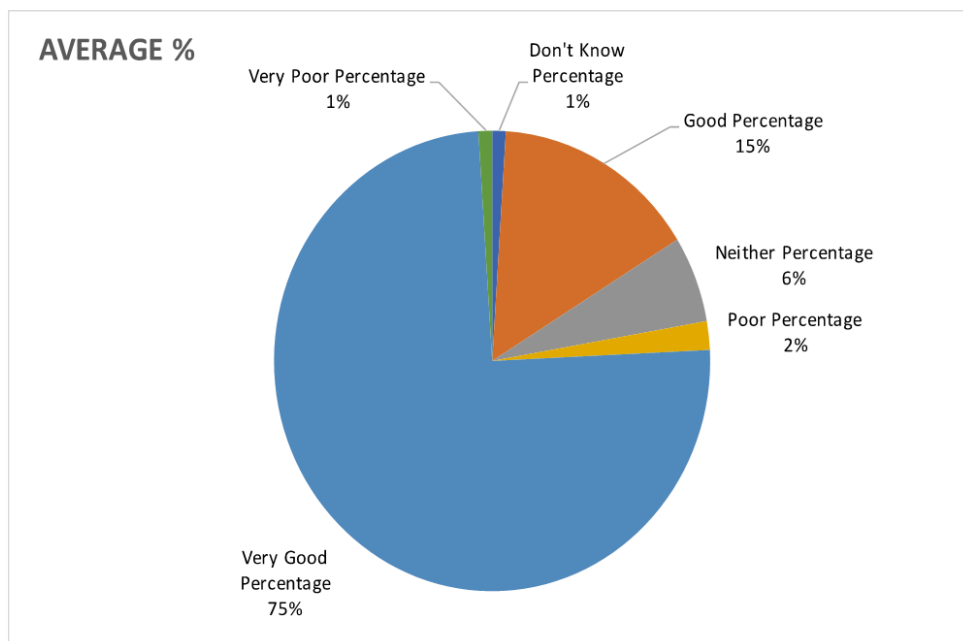
Looking too closely at the news particularly relating to the NHS, it is easy to lose that sense of optimism and hope that spring brings. However, we need to keep in mind and understand that until we cast our votes again, the 'big picture' is out of both our and BMC's control. Our fear that we are not being looked after in the way we expect, is not the choice of those at the sharp end of the health service both in hospitals and general practice, and acting out our fear and anxiety on them is neither fair or helpful, nor will it get us what we think we need or are entitled to. Sadly, this is becoming more frequently an issue for the staff and perhaps the article further down might cause us all to think about how we manage those emotional responses and frustrations.

### Friends and Family Feedback

Beccles Medical Centre regularly receives feedback, with respondents asked to rate performance in one of six categories:

- Very Good
- Good
- Poor
- Very Poor
- Neither
- Don't know

Over the last 12 months the ratings have shown a great improvement with 74% of respondents in January 2025 rating the health centre as "Very Good", up from only 34% in February 2024. Ratings of Poor and Very Poor combined improved from 19% in February 2024 to only 3% in January 2025.



Had a good day at work dear?" ..... "Well, I've been sworn at with every expletive known to mankind. I've been covered in spittle as the rant escalated to violence and I've actually had things thrown at me". Sounds like a day at work in a prison? Sadly not, it's becoming an increasingly frequent occurrence for Reception staff and Care Navigators at Beccles Medical Centre (BMC) and it is getting worse.

This is despite the NHS Zero Tolerance Policy and CCTV coverage of reception.

So how will the surgery respond? BMC currently has a traffic light system in place for aggressive patients.

**Green** - a verbal warning that abusive language and behaviour will not be tolerated at BMC

**Amber** – If the abuse continues the caller/visitor is given a second warning that abusive language is not acceptable and that if the abuse continues the call will be disconnected or if at the practice they will be asked to leave.

**Red** – For those who don't adhere to the receptionists advice the call will be disconnected or they will be asked to leave the premises. The details are collected and passed to the Manager on duty who then has to decide on what action to take.

If this is the first recorded instance of this type of behaviour they may be issued a warning. If it has been previously recorded they have behaved in this manner before they may be issued a letter to advise that will be removed from the practice register and will need to find an alternate GP surgery.

For serial or violent offenders, a report and evidence from recorded calls and CCTV images is made to the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The ICB have the power to remove the patient(s) from Beccles and register them in Ipswich at a secure practice for violent patients. This is clearly a dire consequence, (consider having to go to Ipswich for *all* of your medical needs) *but it will be put into effect where abusive language and behaviour escalates and continues.*

By early March BMC had dealt with a whole year's worth of abusive incidents by patients. We acknowledge that it is difficult for patients and staff alike. BMC is the sole provider for this area and the largest practice in East Anglia. However, the staff team at BMC remains committed to provide the best possible service within constraints placed upon them from Government. Managers will always invite anyone with a grievance to meet and try to seek a satisfactory resolution.

The cost to both the patient population and the staff team is high. Inevitably being treated with such aggression is experienced as quite terrifying to staff members who are trying so hard to do the best job they can in difficult circumstances. The effects of such experiences can lead to their requiring sick leave to process their experience and support to enable a return to work, thus depleting the staff team and further reducing the service. No one wins!

Rest assured the most violent and aggressive incidents are thankfully rare. Shockingly, some like to brag on social media about how they have abused staff and are excited by the fact that staff cannot retaliate. More than one case is currently in process. Sadly, those individuals are unlikely to read this, but please should you hear or read such boasting on social media please don't support them. The team at Beccles have dedicated staff to listen to grievances, so should you have an issue you are not satisfied with then request to see one of them and leave the vulnerable front of house staff to do their job as best they can.